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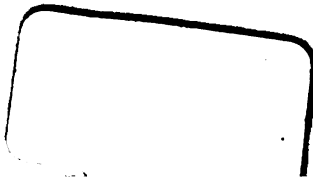
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THE SANDS OF PLEASURE

FILSON YOUNG



KD 14586
B



THE SANDS OF PLEASURE

y



*A bliss in proof, — and prov'd, a very woe ;
Before, a joy proposed ; behind, a dream ;
All this the world well knows ; yet none knows well
To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell.*

The Sands of Pleasure

BY

FILSON YOUNG

Author of "The Happy Motorist," "Venus and Cupid, an
Impression," "Ireland at the Crossroads,"
"Christopher Columbus," etc.



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L. G. R.

*When in the pride of life our steps go down
And mingle lightly with the unresting throng
Of souls released from sense of right and wrong
To wear the fetters of our smile or frown,
How dusty with the dust of street and town
Grow then our garments, and how harsh the song
Of voices that once charmed us, when too strong
We hear the strains our laughter cannot drown!
Yet could we dwell beyond the whirl and toil
By some loud ocean shore or mountain steep,
And drink the wine of loneliness too deep
Ever to thirst again, we soon should yield
To easy slumber, drugged by salt and soil,
And rest forgetful of the strenuous field.*

***“Nè creator nè creatura mai
..... fu senza amore.”***

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

FOR the benefit of readers who may be puzzled by certain references in this story the publisher wishes to explain that the lighthouses, lightships, and fog-signals around the British Islands are under the control of a body known as the Corporation of Trinity House. This corporation, consisting of a certain number of Elder Brethren and Younger Brethren, who are for the most part retired sea-captains and naval officers, collects certain dues from the merchant shipping of Great Britain and Ireland, and applies them to the erection and maintenance of lighthouses.

The publisher may also remind American readers that monastic communities still exist in England, among them several houses of the Cistercian or Trappist Order.

TO THE READER

***I**F a man's work be not its own apology he will hardly mend or excuse it by more words. "I had a story to tell; I have told it as well as I knew how" — that ought to be enough, and more than enough, for me to say about this book. But in this age good taste greatly busies itself about matters of social morality; and has decreed, with what wisdom I do not pretend to measure, that this subject and that, very urgent though they may be in the life of man, shall not be written or read about in books designed merely for the entertainment of his mind. I have disobeyed this decree, and cast a great part of my tale in a region held, under the rules of good taste, to be out of bounds; and it is in justice to readers who expect their authors to be subject to this rule that I now advertise my breach and disregard of it. The profession of Toni is a very ancient one, and has been held honorable in other times than ours; and although in spite of the determined idealism of some people who write and speak of it in ignorance it is in fact dishonorable and degraded, its social influence is too great to be ignored.*

In obscure ways it impinges upon some of the finest characters among mankind, takes its part in their education, and through them makes its mark on the whole world. But whether we regard it as a social disorder, or as a social necessity, or simply as an integral part of our civilization, to be accepted as unavoidable and uncontrollable, — in whatever way we regard it, it remains important and worthy of all the intelligent and sympathetic study which the sociologist can bring to bear on it.

What it is doing in a work of art, you may say, is another question. But the business of literature is with the whole of life; and my business, in such contributions to literature as I may attempt to make, is with all of the life of my time that I can see and grasp. The life of man in this moment of the world's history, and all that pertains to or affects it — that I believe to be the raw material available for the writer of fiction who is willing to risk failure in some better cause than the manufacture of the novel of commerce. Into my view and knowledge of the world immediately about me come Richards innumerable, and Tonis not so many; and to the making of character go not only the influences of the wise and good in man, but also of the foolish and base. The collision of influences, of the sane mind with what is socially insane, produces daily results that are surprising, but always instructive to men and

women who are at all capable of finding interest in humane matters at large; and no one can be said to appreciate character in the modern world who does not recognize the existence of this among other social influences, and know at least something of how it works. Not hysterically, or with shudderings and averted eyes; that is not recognition, nor are such attitudes becoming in the student; but calmly and without dismay, disentangling the individual interest and merit from the confused mass. It is obviously impossible that every one should know the half-world at first hand; but there is every reason why mature people should read about it, not bitterly or unpleasantly, but as pleasantly as possible, in the mirror of a page written without moral preoccupations. For if there be a moral in this tale (and I think there is) it comes assuredly from the incidents themselves, and not from my view of them. My aim was simply to exhibit a character in one of those moments of change and influence which in some form or other come to us all and test the ballast and steering-gear of our lives.

For the rest it is wholesome to study the fixed amid the fluent, to trace what is (in our phrase) eternal amid what changes with the ages. Richard in *Maxim's* is a figure of our day, in a scene highly typical of our day, and, in its details at least, peculiar to it; but his ordeal there is a part of man's unchanging trial in the world. If

it be of interest to watch the changing face of nature, and to trace on some down or moorland signs of the war and peace of a thousand years ago, to see in imagination forests green and leafy where now are only the heather and the wind; of how much more interest is it to trace the secular rings and mark our microscopic notches on that other plant of time which, like the Life-tree Igdrasil, "has its roots down in the kingdoms of Hela and Death, and whose boughs overspread the Highest Heaven."

BOOK I
THE BUILDER

BOOK II
THE HOUSE ON THE SANDS

BOOK III
THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

BOOK 1
THE BUILDER

THE SANDS OF PLEASURE

I

THE afternoon was filled with sound and sunshine. About one of those grim promontories that are England's foothold in the Atlantic the waves were rolling in, long and lazy, like seaworn travellers too weary for anything but the sudden rest of the shore. A mild breeze from the south heralded them with airs redolent of the freshness of their long voyage, and hovered above the foam and commotion of their landfall.

The land there goes down to the sea, slowly and majestically, without haste or abruptness. Ten miles inland the world of railway and town ends, and the preparation for this august meeting of land and sea begins. The changing seasons cover the vast expanse of moor with gorse or heather, and in loneliness and the peace of salt fresh airs earth makes ready to keep her tryst. An almost savage solemnity envelops these rolling golden

miles; only the sea, like an impatient bridegroom, sends scouts and heralds whose white wings and wild voices hover above the gorse. A little farther, and earth takes her farewell of man: a few minute hamlets sheltering in the valleys that begin to seam the promontory; a few scattered farms, a few bleak churches where the voice of prayer mingles with the strong winds; and then from great scarps and bastions of rock, from grass-covered cliffs and steepes of serpentine, she goes down to receive the long kisses of the waves.

They are cold or passionate, those kisses, savage or tender, according to the mood of the sea. In this Cornish place and on this afternoon they were warm and gentle and passionless, a great and quiet tide of fluent life that swept up to and enveloped the shore. The sound of them filled the air with a continuous murmur of varying harmonies that rose and fell along the sweeping coast of the promontory. About its outer points, where the rocks went down into deep water like the teeth of a saw, the quiet waves frayed themselves into fleece and foam, and divided with a belt of moving white the gray old rock from the hazy blue of the sea. A few sailing-ships leaned to the breeze, standing in to take their last sight of land for many a week and to make their numbers to the signal-station on the hill; and here and there, on the same broad pathway, the smoke of steamers smudged the long level of the horizon.

Yet in a large view nothing seemed alive and moving but the waves; and even they only took shape as they neared the shore and felt the check of the land. In long straight lines of darker blue the furrows rose from their bed of glittering wrinkles; advanced and grew, showed green and transparent as their feet trod the carpeting of sand between the rocks; and then broke and tripped, and spilled and poured and eddied, and shot hissing tongues of snow among the sun-warmed barricades of earth.

A young man was walking along the cart-road that leads over the top of Poltesco Head to the cliffs and rocks. His swinging walk was full of energy and happiness, as though he were glad on this golden afternoon to be a sharer in life and the world. Above his head larks were singing, and now and then the melancholy cry of a seagull interrupted that happy music; but the dominating sound about him was the pervading voice of the seashore that sent its rumor up to him in a continuous and mellow murmur. As he approached the seaward end of the promontory this sound increased, so that the whole world seemed to be filled with it. The young man's step quickened, as though answering to a summons; and suddenly a smile broke upon his sun-burned face as, coming toward the end of the high cart-road, he paused and seemed to listen.

From the rocks below him now rose another murmur, higher in tone than that of the waves, that mingled with their harmonies and yet remained clearly distinguished from them. A metallic and ringing sound floated above the land, a sound composed of single and intermittent notes that yet formed a continuous and resonant tone. Clinkings and hammerings, beatings of iron on iron and stone on stone—the sound of human labor. Enclosed as though in the great eternal shell of the sea's voices, it thus became a kind of kernel of music in this lonely place, and arrested the attention by a rare and precious quality of its own. Over a scene so glittering and grand, so filled with the influence and dignity of large spaces, so salted and sweetened by the fresh airs of the sea, this echo of human activity hung like a charm, and compelled attention to the work of which it was an overtone. Yet so mighty are the proportions of this rocky and broken extremity of land that any one sitting on the grassy summit of the cliff and looking seaward along the low point of the rocks might easily have failed to notice immediately the signs of human activity whence the ringing sounds rose. To Richard Grey, however, sound and scene were both familiar, and his practised scrutiny at once recognized the signs of human life and movement on the rocks: men moving hither and thither like insects in their crevices; the pigmy arms of cranes wav-

ing and circling in the air; wooden sheds and shanties, piles of stone, mortar, ironwork, sand; the smoke of a forge; the busy movement of picks and drills, the circle of hammers upon the anvil. Men were fetching and carrying fresh water from a sort of reservoir fed by pipes from the cliff; other men were mixing mortar; others were carrying it in small loads backwards and forwards, scrambling over the rough rocks or walking gingerly along slippery causeways. Compared with the immense march of the waves, the wide and solemn movement of the clouds, the remote drift of the ships along the distant horizon, this antlike activity seemed petty and fretful, as though it had no part in order or usefulness.

But looked at more nearly, it arrested the attention and directed it to an obvious and central purpose. On the outermost of the rocks, and not far from where the green waves broke and foamed, a snow-white shape, the perfection of grace and simplicity, rose above the dark, seaworn platform. It seemed to grow like the trunk of a tree out of the rock, the circumference spreading out at the base as though to hold and adapt itself to the irregularities of the surface, and springing up with a gradual contraction of girth that yet seemed to gather into itself all the strength and anchorage of the roots. The scaffoldings and ladders that clung around it hardly obscured its grace and whiteness, but seemed rather to envelop

it tenderly in a caress of labor. And to it and from it as a centre the whole movement of this little colony of toiling men came and went. Its tall presence explained everything, and made clear the purpose of anvil, pick, and drill. The sweeping conformation of the coast, the ceaseless plying of ships to and fro on the world's great pathway a few leagues off, the pull of the tides and the setting of the prevalent winds made of the Snail Rocks a snare and danger to men; and the crowded graves in the little churchyard on the cliff, as well as the whitening bones of ships on some of the more sheltered ledges, were a reminder of their past cruelties. The fair white tower rising there, planted among their very teeth, marked the end of their reign of terror, and would presently ordain them ministers of safety and guiding.

As Richard Grey left the cart-road and began to descend the rough path worn in the face of the cliff, he came full in sight of the tower, and his heart made a little movement of joy. Young as he was, with all the pulses of life quick and happy in his body, that cold white shape was wife, child, mistress to him. To its building and equipment all his life and training had been directed; he knew no other ambition but that of its creation and the establishment of the principles which its success should prove; he dreamed of no greater pleasure than the assurance that

it would stand and shine there long after his own life was over, and be the monument of his own and his father's scientific work. The son of a famous engineer, he had been educated and trained to work out certain principles of lighthouse construction at which his father had arrived late in life. With an aptness rare in sons whose careers are thus predestined for them he had applied himself with gusto to the necessary studies; and his father before he died had the joy of recognizing in his son a fellow craftsman and enthusiast, and of descrying in his clear and capable mind a promise of distinction greater even than his own. No shadow had ever come between them to disturb their happy relationship. Richard's mother had died in his early boyhood, leaving no other children; and the father and son, thus thrown together, had devoted themselves to each other and to their common work with a singleness that had excluded from Richard's life many of the interests incidental to youth. His school holidays were spent in voyages with his father in a Trinity yacht, or in expeditions to some rock or headland where work was in progress; and he thus acquired an impatience of confinement and the life of cities, and a sense of proprietorship in large and windy spaces and the bright environment of the sea. And when, later, he went abroad to spend the year of travel which his father, with old-fashioned wisdom, deemed the

proper bridge between academic and vital education, it was to far-away straits, and classic promontories of the Old World, that his interests led him; and from a brief sojourn in some glittering capital he would hurry to the coasts of Greece or Egypt and the shores of half-forgotten seas, to idle for weeks about the place of some old Pharos, dreaming of the history of men, reconstructing in imagination the maritime life of vanished nations, and tracing the links between those dead times and his own romantic profession. A strange blend of the artist and the man of science, the poet and the craftsman, he was normal and wholesome in the extremely simple view of life which he thus acquired. It was a view that had many blanks, and that inevitably left to the thirties and forties many a discovery and painful struggle that most of us encompass in the twenties; but it included a large and human understanding of things not actually experienced, along with the inevitable tinge of Puritanism that stiffens a life of strenuous labor and purpose.

Thus it was that until the age of thirty he knew hardly any interests but those that arose out of his work or lay in his reading. His father lived long enough to see him launched on his career as an engineer in the service of the Trinity Board, and to have him working with him as his assistant when he began to build the lighthouse on the Snail Rocks; and his death, the first sorrow that

Richard had known, served only to raise the son's interest in their common work to an almost passionate devotion. His own capacity and brilliancy as an engineer combined with the influence of his father's name to secure him ready appreciation in the eyes of the Brethren of the Trinity, that genial and rubicund company; and at his father's death it was decided to entrust to Richard the completion of the Snail Rock lighthouse. There were, it is true, head-shakings and pursings of lips on the part of some old members of the Board; but Richard was so reasonable and ingratiating, and veiled his enthusiasm so cleverly in the garb of a prudent conservatism, that he won the hearts and heads of the genial corporation. Moreover, he was regarded more or less as a child of the Trinity, and was given his chance.

For four years the work had absorbed him completely, and now on this summer afternoon, a man of thirty-one, he saw it nearing completion at last. It was some sense of success being thus within sight that stirred his heart as he paused at the beginning of the cliff path and looked at the fair virginal form of the lighthouse standing so white and graceful against the blue of sea and sky. In these four years it had become a very real part of himself, and was invested with a personality that dominated not only himself and his colony of workmen, but the whole environ-

ment of sea and land. As he had returned to it after each winter and found it standing there, all unshaken and undismayed by the tremendous assault of the sea, his heart had warmed to it in gratitude and love. Into every course had been built something of his father; every joint and dovetail of the carefully shaped stones had been made on principles which they had evolved together; and as it grew under his hand a belief in his father's presence, a healing sense of immortality, and of the existence of a man's soul in the fruit of his labor, grew with it. The old gentleman, who was something of a bookworm, had been of an epigrammatic turn, and a certain quaint platitude of his, *We are the sum of what we do*, came back to Richard's mind as he gazed on the unfinished lighthouse tower. He felt more than ever that it was his father's bequest of labor to him, and more than ever he felt pride and elation in the thought that the work was well and faithfully done.

As he hastened down the path to the scattered sheds and benches where the masons were working, a great bulky man, the foreman, rolled up to him. John Macneil was a special ally of Richard's; he had worked under his father, and shared something of the Grey passion for lighthouse work; and wherever there was a dangerous or difficult job in a particularly exposed place,

Macneil's huge frame could be seen, straddling about slippery skerries, or clinging to the margin of some precipitous cliff, or swinging on the hook of a crane, his red honest face all puckered with absorbed interest or anxiety in the work. It now wore a grin of excitement, as the two men went down to the boat that lay waiting to take them off to the outer rocks.

"Good evening, Mr. Richard, sir; that's a grand evening. Man, but you should have been here this afternoon wi' your rod. The poddies were leppin' all round the big rock, and it was all I could do to keep the men to their work."

"Were they? I'm sorry to have missed that; perhaps they'll turn up again toward sunset. How's the work gone?"

Instantly the red laughing face took on a child's seriousness.

"Oh, pairfectly well, sir; I'm no' complaining. We've finished the binding course, and I've narrowed that ventilator to nine and a half inches, as you said. Price was for giving it the full ten, if I'd permitted him. No' but what I think he's right; but you and me's not going to fall out over half an inch, Mr. Richard"—and they plunged into technical details. They landed on the jagged, ugly rock on which the lighthouse stood, and together inspected the works, the young alert man and the elderly alert man, poring upon measurements and weights, examining a case of

bolts that had arrived that afternoon, discussing the quality of iron like connoisseurs tasting wine; testing cement, examining masons' and carpenters' work, climbing the scaffold to the top course of the tower and scrutinizing the wonderfully shaped stones that fitted into each other like a Chinese puzzle — in a word, tasting to the full the joy of craftsmen in their craft.

As the western sky reddened a whistle sounded, and labor ceased. Tools were collected, coats were put on, and the men crowded into the waiting boats, that presently floated in, rising and falling on the clear green waves. Arrived at the little landing-slip, they filed up the path to the row of wooden barracks that crowned the great black summit of Poltesco Head and were their habitation for the working season. Lamps shone, smoke rose from the cook's fire, the evening meal was prepared and eaten, pipes were lit and smoked as an accompaniment to newspapers and talk. In his separate little shanty on the cliff Richard Grey produced his instruments after his evening meal was finished, and sat late at his drawing-desk; and it was not until the steady snores of Macneil in the adjoining cabin had firmly established themselves that he put away his papers and prepared to seek his own camp-bed. But before he did so he went down, as was his habit, to take a last look at the works. The tide and the moon had risen, and were flooding

the rocks with light and foaming waves; to the northeast the gleam of the searchlight on Penedennis Castle shimmered at intervals in the sky; and far out at sea twinkled the lights of a passing liner, thundering westward to the open sea. The waters were calm except where the swell broke on the rocks, and their eternal voice rose and fell in the silence. The white tower glimmered ghostly in the moonlight; it stood there proud and tranquil, like a thing that should endure forever. Richard stood beside it looking into the violet night until a wave spilling at his feet sent him to seek the shelter of his cabin.

II

THE tourist who on a summer's day adventures as far as Poltesco Head sees only the buildings of the lighthouse establishment, dazzling in snowy whitewash; the keepers' houses, with their trim walls and gardens where the poppies shake in the breeze and the clothes lie bleaching on the hedges; and, over the deep blue-water gap at the cliff's verge, the serrated ridges, the shelves and skerries and ledges of the Snail Rocks, with the lighthouse itself beyond. The tower stands fair and white on the Outer Snail, its lantern glittering in the sunshine, the birds wheeling around the balcony, the green seas washing about its base; but on tower and causeway, dwellings and gardens, there rests now profound peace and loneliness; the human repose which no turmoil of the sea can ever break; the Sabbath of accomplished labor.

But in the days when Richard Grey and John Macneil and their little company of laborers and artificers kept house in the wooden shanties on the cliff-side the scene was very different. Many sounds mingled in the clear air, and the ceaseless

passage to and fro of the dust-colored figures of the men kept the little settlement alive with that air of bustle and absorption which is characteristic of such scenes of transitory labor. The building of a rock lighthouse is a slow and difficult task, carried on far from the busy haunts of men, and attracting little of their attention; and often it is only the round eyes of the sea-gulls that watch and wonder at this clamorous invasion of their sanctuaries. The lighthouse on the Snail had its own special problems, for which its nearness to the land and the quarries made some compensation; but the very small surface of the outer rock left uncovered at low water made the first part of the building very slow indeed. The first work of old Sir Everard Grey and his son, after the triangulation and survey of the rocks, and when the site and design of the lighthouse had been determined, was the erection of some temporary structure on which the smith's forge could be erected above high-water mark, so that the picks and boring tools could be kept sharp; and the erection of the beacon had occupied half of the first season's work. Then the excavation of a shallow foundation pit had been begun, and before the end of the season the first two courses of masonry, all dovetailed and fitted and locked together, had been successfully laid, and the work left to the storms of winter. On resuming work the next spring nothing was found to have been

damaged; and in that season twenty-eight more courses were laid, completing the solid part of the tower and raising it some forty feet in height and five and twenty feet above high-water mark. But the following winter was one of disaster. Sir Everard died after a short illness, and later, in the heavy gales of February, the beacon was washed away, damaging some of the upper courses of the tower as it was hurled against them.

It was then that Richard, who had been acting as his father's assistant, applied for and, after some difficulty, obtained permission to carry out the work himself. In adopting a certain curve—the conchoidal—for the sides of his tower, Sir Everard had gone flat in the face of the sacred precepts of Smeaton and Stevenson, and with but little sympathy from his colleagues, who were all wedded either to the parabolic or the hyperbolic frustra. The curve up which the waves could most easily lick, so to speak, and have their strength diverted; the disposition of the superincumbent weight of the tower so that it might with the greatest advantage press immediately over the stones of the lower courses, without imparting to them a spreading tendency; the weight to be opposed to the waves, and its decrease upwards in proportion to the decrease of their strength,—these are the considerations on which such a design depends; and as Sir Everard's views upon them were new then, it followed that

his design was also a little unorthodox. But Richard at any rate was a confident believer, and when he took over the work on which the two had so hopefully labored, although he did it with a heavy heart, his confidence in the result was unshakable.

That was two years ago — years filled with hard work and long hours of exposure on the rock and about the workshops on Poltesco Head. Richard had fallen in love with his occupation — surely the happiest destiny that can befall any man; and in the long hours spent in the fresh briny air, cheered with the bright surrounding glitter of the sea, wet with the soft rains, and blown upon by the salt winds, he had found a contentment of mind that excluded all desire for change or even companionship. When he wanted to talk, he talked to Macneil, who was always ready for abstract discussions, and who stood to Richard in the compound relation of instructor, nurse, bully, right-hand man, and abject slave. But the effect on the young engineer of so absorbing and responsible a work was almost to stupefy his social instincts; he found in it an outlet for the whole of his energy, and when his day's work was over he was glad to throw himself on his bed and sleep. Thus day followed day with a succession of minute interests — each important and distinguished from the rest, but all together producing an effect of monotony that offered little opposi-

tion to the passage of time, which slipped by almost unheeded. There was the waking up in the morning, and the first anxious look at the weather; the hasty cup of coffee — if the tide fell early — and the careful embarkation of the men in the two big flat-bottomed boats that ferried them from the cliff to the outer rocks; due division and apportionment of labor, so that no one department would be kept waiting for another during the short tide's work; superintendence of a dozen delicate operations, decisions on a dozen matters a mistake in which might have meant a week's delay; passionately interested witnessings of the landing and craning and laying of a great stone; anxious watching of the returning tide, so that the last moment of work might be secured; blowing of whistles, and hasty collection of tools and securing of the work; and last, the hurried embarkation into the boats, while the men often stood up to their middles in water and the returning flood swept over the rock. Between tides there would be the work ashore to superintend — the cutting and preparing of stones, loading of boats, joinery, and endless iron work on stanchions, bats, holdfasts, clamps, chains, and so forth. Then back again with the first ebbing of the tide from the rock, to repeat the same minute, careful, and laborious round. Sometimes the first tide's work would be done in the gray summer dawn, while the sky reddened and burned,

and the sea-birds cried all about the rock as they fished for their morning meal; sometimes the second tide would occur in the evening, when the boats would row off to the rock in a crimson sunset, and the flares and torches and forge fires would glare long into the night, and make on the peaceful seascape a scene of lurid and infernal activity.

The variety thus lay in the work itself, enclosed in an outward shell of monotony. The making of mortar, for example, does not seem to be a promising matter of interest; but it was one of Richard's absorbing cares. He had met with extreme difficulty in finding laborers who could be induced to take sufficient care in the mixing of the special kind of cement used in building a sea-tower, and one after another had been discharged, until he had found an old local inhabitant, one Treleath, who took exactly the right kind of conscientious pride in the humble but important task, and who felt that the success of the operations depended wholly on himself. And if you had gone down to the works any day and every day during the season, you would have seen no change in the patient old figure, with his pale face and blue Breton eyes, bending over the iron tubs, mixing and pouring, and directing the minion who worked under him. But in fact every cask of sand that was opened, every barrel of lime, every case of cement, had its possi-

bilities of change and variety. The sand, perhaps, would be a little dull and soft; Treleath would thrust his arm into it, take out a pinch, crumble it, taste it, as though it were some priceless comestible. "Take et away," he would say; "that ain't no use to we; that never seen Mulford River;" and then the next time Richard happened to pass: "I shall have to ask you to speak about the sand again, Mr. Grey, zur; I can't put that there stuff into the mortar; there bean't no sharpness in it. They don't belong to send stuff like that to we, and us paying a good price up to Mulford, too." And the old man would shake his head, and broach another cask, which he and Richard would examine together like fellow experts. Although he never said anything very interesting, the old man had a slow dignity of speech and demeanor that delighted Richard, who often made occasions of consulting him for no other purpose than to enjoy his deliberate conversation. He valued his words, and always looked around the horizon before he spoke, with an air of having taken into consideration every matter, earthly and celestial, that could possibly qualify his opinion. He had a wife, a little fat pillar of a woman as old as himself, who loved him with a romantic worship, and addressed him as "tender dear." She had interviewed Richard on the morning after her husband's appointment: "And you'll let me sit on the cliffs near that

tender dear, sir, where I can see him working, as I've always done in times past, wherever he be; and thanking you kindly, sir, but 'tis cheer for him through the long day to look up and see me where I be, and can watch over him while knitting" — so that the red shawl of Mrs. Treleath on the cliff became a sort of ensign, to those approaching from the land, that work was going on ashore and that the men were off the rock.

The morning following Richard's return to the Rock began a typical day's work. The early summer had seen the completion of the masonry of the tower, with the exception of the projecting cornice or capital which was to form the balcony outside the lantern; there only remained the pointing, the completion of the carpenter's work on fittings inside, the erection of the lantern, the completion of the light-keepers' homes ashore, and finally, the putting in of the lamp with its revolving machinery.

On this day they were to land and set some of the heavy stones for the cornice — a delicate and difficult task to which Richard looked forward with particular interest and anxiety. The tide served at about six o'clock, and when Richard came out of his cabin at half-past five a glorious summer morning, with a sea as calm as a mill-pond, promised well for the success of the operations. The Rock was then just showing above the

water. The occasion being a special one, on which the last course of the tower was to be built, orders had been given that it was to be marked in the usual way; and at this moment the men were sitting about on the grass each holding a cup or glass, into which the cook was pouring a tot of rum. When all the vessels had been charged, Macneil took his hat off and stood a little apart and spoke up. It was his custom, as a protest against the dissolute habits of the working man, to attempt to invest such occasions with as much solemnity and as little conviviality as possible — an attempt, to do him justice, in which he was not generally successful.

“Now, men, as we’ve arrived in the maircy o’ Providence at the last coorse o’ the light, it’s the engineer’s orders that a glass o’ rum should be sairved to all hands — no’ as a beverage, ye’ll understan’, but as a mark o’ the guidness o’ Providence. (Mr. Flanagan, mebbe ye’ll leave over-haulin’ yon fishin’-tackle till we’re through with this.) As I was sayin’, o’ the guidness o’ Providence. The most of us has been here four years now, and I’ll leave ye to say who you’ve to thank that there’s been no seeckness or loss o’ life among us. So let’s all be upstanding, and here’s drinkin’ Mr. Grey’s guid health, and success to the Snail Lighthouse!”

Three rousing cheers followed, and then a convivial voice striking up “For he’s a jolly good

fellow," that immortal song was rendered with gusto. The scene was in strange contrast to the usual lamplit environment of a toast — the little group standing bareheaded on the verge of the great frowning cliff, with the early morning sunshine throwing its shadows long on the grass, and the rough, rousing song mingling with the call of the sea-gulls. Richard stood somewhat sheepishly in the doorway of his cabin until they had finished, and the cups and glasses had all been up-ended.

"All right, men, that'll do. Very much obliged to you, I'm sure. We shall know more about it by the time we've finished this day's work. Off with you now, and get your tools."

The men were quickly marshalled down to the boats that stood waiting on the scrap of shingly beach below the cliff. Treleath was the first away, in the small flat devoted to his use for ferrying mortar to the rock; and two cargoes of stones, which had been loaded into the lighters the night before, were towed off by the boats. The short voyage accomplished, and the men landed on the rock, the lighters were brought round to a little creek where a jib-crane hung over the water. All the men were now sent to their stations. The masons climbed the ladders and scaffolding to the summit of the tower, where they began to prepare the bed for the new stones; the smiths kindled the forge-fires; men were stationed at the differ-

ent guy-tackles, falls, and outhauls of the cranes; while others manned the sling and cradle used for sending up the mortar, or took their places at the little iron railway that led from the landing-place to the tower.

The elaborate modelling of these cornice-stones, and the special shape by means of which they were locked and fitted into their neighbors, made them extremely precious and brittle to handle, as damage to any of their many edges would have meant the cutting of a new stone and several days' delay. Therefore Richard watched with anxious eyes every movement, as the sequence of labor took hold of these precious blocks and began to hoist them toward their places. When all were ready a great block of granite—the first stone of the ninety-eighth course—marked *XCVIII-1*, and weighing nearly two tons, was craned up from the deck of the lighter and deposited on an iron trolley on the railway. That was the first stage—simple enough in calm weather, but rendered highly difficult and dangerous by the slightest swell of the sea. Richard allowed himself to light a pipe while the stone was being slowly wheeled along the railway and brought under the chains that were to raise it to the tower. This was done in three stages. A great oak beam, to the end of which stout tackles were fitted, projecting horizontally from the lighthouse thirty feet above the rock; thirty feet higher projected another beam,

fitted in the same way; and at the top of the tower rose the iron balance crane — a T-shaped structure supported on a pillar in the centre of the building, from one end of which the stones were raised, while along the other a heavy counterweight was moved in accordance with the position of the stone.

Slowly, carefully, laboriously, the great stone was raised from the trolley and swung upwards beside the wall of the tower. When it had been raised as high as the first crane, two men came swinging down from above on the tackle of the second; and, standing on the block, they made fast the grips of the second crane to it. "Haul!" The order was given, the tackle tightened, the grips took hold, and the stone began to rise again, while the two men, now perched on the projecting beam of the first crane, cast off its tackle, which was sent down again. Once more the stone rose, swung high under the beam of the second crane; there it was transferred to the grip of the balance crane, which swung it up and up, until it was higher than the lighthouse. Richard, who was standing below on the rock, could see the arm of the crane with its precious burden beginning to swing around and to point toward its place on the tower. He could do nothing more but watch; it was all out of his power; he must depend on the men he had trained and the machinery he had devised. Slowly the crane

came round, and then stopped; gradually the stone moved inwards as the gearing was worked which moved the tackle along the arm; at last it rested over its place. He could see the masons, silhouetted against the bright sky, putting the last touches to the bed of mortar. Then "Lower!" — the sharp command floated down to him, and the mass of granite rested on its new bed, hardly less solid and immovable than its foundations in the quarry ashore. Macneil, who was superintending the laying operations, suppressed a tendency to cheering. Richard ran to the ladders, and in a few minutes was standing with a little group on the staging at the summit of the tower. There lay the great stone, faithfully copied from the wooden pattern made under Sir Everard's supervision, fitting exactly into its place as though it had grown there; and it is difficult to convey to the lay mind any idea of the emotion and satisfaction with which Richard regarded it.

Thereafter the work went on more quickly. While the second stone was being laid, the third was hanging ready from the upper crane; the fourth was on the lower crane; the fifth was on the railway; the sixth was being raised from the boat. In perfect order and harmony, on this little narrow sea-worn piece of rock, the various squads of men worked together interdependently, so that the work of their hands grew smoothly and rapidly, and the cornice began to take shape

round the summit of the tower. When the tide overflowed the rock and covered the railway, the water was still so smooth that they were able to continue building by making fast the lighters beside the tower itself under the first crane, so that there were but three stages in the journey of the stones from the boats to their places on the tower, instead of five. They worked continuously for thirteen hours, with only half an hour's interval for dinner; and when they rowed away in the evening glow, tired but triumphant, the whole of the outside ring of stones were in their places.

That, however, was hardly a typical day; it was indeed one of the longest and most successful days of work in the whole history of the building. There were other days on which no impression seemed to be made on the slow and difficult task; days when the breach of the sea on the rock made landing there hazardous; when some piece of clumsiness or carelessness on the part of a workman resulted in the loss of a stone, the breaking of a tackle, or the staving in of a boat; when, in spite of all the efforts of Richard Grey, and all the activity of John Macneil, the men seemed stupid and unhandy, and things went all awry; when the tools would not cut, nor the cement take bond, nor the wedges jamb. And in all this long struggle the one unrelenting enemy was the sea. It alone never relaxed its efforts, never missed its opportunity, never failed to take advantage of any neg-

ligence or weakness of the builders. There was the disastrous day when a lighter, discharging stones at the end of a tide's work, and in a heavy ground swell, was smashed against a rock and capsized, throwing her heavy deck cargo about the rock; when the sea rose in the night and washed the stones, a ton weight each, about as though they had been pebbles, and ground their fine shapes and angles down to powder, and finally threw them down to rest among the roots of the deep-water seaweeds. However much absorbed he might become in the work, Richard learned never to relax his watch on his restless enemy; he had always one eye on the sea and sky, until he became steeped in the sense of the sea's personality. Its languid warm waves, its busy activity in the summer breezes, its might and terrible anger in stormy weather, its hollow, melancholy voice whose echo hangs forever about that wild shore — these were to him but varying expressions of one nature, the changing moods of one creature. He came to know it for a blind thing, urged by profound passions far beyond its own control; feeling and fumbling for its victims, sly and treacherous in its calmness, yet great even in its treachery.

And beautiful — God, how beautiful, and how he loved its beauty, even while he cursed and fought against its strength! There were hot summer days when its clear, cool, transparent

depths of peacock or emerald wooed him to go down into them, and explore the magic carpets of sand that they revealed; days of wind and sun, when the whole vast expanse shimmered and twinkled in a lyric ecstasy of laughter; other days, haunted by cloud and wandering airs, when over the calm surface swept invisible faery armies, whose footprints were fleeting shadows of deeper blue, and their passage marked by lines and networks, smooth pathways, mysterious eddies, tracks, and wakes as of invisible ships. In all these moods he learned to know it and to watch it with an untiring vigilance, and to feel, even in his moments of triumph over it, that it suffered him rather than obeyed him.

III

EXCEPT for the tiny village in the valley that runs up from Poltesco Bay, and a few farms, headquarters of a rather profitless struggle with thin soil and wild weather, there are few human habitations in the vicinity of that bluff seashore. Richard Grey's nearest neighbor was the tenant of a little cottage that stood on the cliffs above Poltesco Bay—a minute establishment to which Lady Killard was in the habit of retreating for a month or two every year when the fatigues of a London season and of her husband's legislative labors proved too much for her. Richard had seen little of her, but had liked what he had seen; she was young, attractive, Irish, and friendly, and on the rare occasions when they met she took trouble to let Richard know that he would always be welcome at the Hermitage. This summer she had as her guests a brother and sister, distant cousins of her husband's; and having met and found them in the course of one of his lonely walks, Richard had been much attracted by the man, John Lauder. He was close upon forty years of age, and had in his earlier youth attained

some distinction as a painter in Paris; but the possession of sufficient private means had introduced distractions into his life. He had inevitably become less of an artist and more of a man of the world; yet the effect of his studio years remained with him, and gave to his easy life a breadth and sincerity which it might otherwise have lacked.

On the afternoon of a day of southeast squalls, Richard Grey, attended by a faithful satellite in the shape of his setter Rufus, was standing in the lee of the unfinished light-keepers' houses watching some draining operations. There was a crashing run of sea on the rock, and it had been impossible to land upon it; the wind continually brought up heavy flaws of rain, that interfered with the concreting of the garden walls; and work was almost entirely confined to the joiners, who were busy with flooring and fitting. There was nothing for Richard to do but to look on, and he welcomed the sight of a stalwart figure wrapped in a raincoat coming down over the cliff edge. It proved to be John Lauder come to pay him a visit.

"How do you do?" said Richard. "I'm afraid you've chosen a bad day for your visit; there's no going off to the rock to-day."

"I know; but I couldn't stay indoors any more; and the direction of my walk suggested looking you up. You all look pretty wet and miserable here," he added, surveying the little

scattered groups of rain-soaked figures toiling with wet tools and covered with mire and clay.

"I know; it's beastly. Come into my den and have a pipe; we can at least be dry there."

Richard, whistling to the dog, led the way; and they went into the cabin, lined with pine boarding fresh from the plane. It was divided by a partition into an inner bedroom and a larger apartment furnished with chairs and a table, a drawing-desk, a couple of lounge chairs, a few trunks and boxes, some guns and fishing-tackle, and several shelves filled with books. A few engineering drawings and photographs were nailed on the walls, and throughout the room were littered the paraphernalia of the confirmed smoker.

"I think," said Richard, "that a whiskey and soda wouldn't be a bad idea?"

Lauder having signified the doubtful acquiescence which is part of the ritual of the bottle, Richard brought from a cupboard the necessary ingredients.

"You see, I live in rather a piggish way here," he said, setting on the table a tin of tobacco, a bottle of whiskey, two thick glasses, and a siphon; "but it's wonderful how it simplifies life when eating and drinking are merely the satisfying of hunger and thirst."

"The mark of Schweppe," said Lauder, as the soda foamed into the glass, "is a wonderful decoration to simplicity." He lit his pipe and sipped

at his glass; and as a squall suddenly battered upon the little house, and set the window streaming with rain, he took another thoughtful sip, said, "Ah!" leaned back in his chair, and emitted a blue and fragrant cloud of tobacco smoke.

Another clap of wind shook the house, and on the back of it, banging the door behind him, entered John Macneil, as though he had been blown in. He shook the rain off his cap, and then caught sight of Lauder.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Richard; I didn't know —"

"It's only Mr. Lauder; come in, Macneil. Lauder, this is John Macneil, who looks after me and runs the Trinity House."

"And I don't know which of the two of them gives me the most trouble, sir," said Macneil. "That's a terrible morning — no work to be done till the win' changes."

"Sit down and light your pipe," said Richard. Macneil belonged to that rare class of subordinates of whom an autocrat may make companions; and Richard had grown into something like intimacy with this man of many trades and nomad life. Being Scotch, he was speculative and metaphysical, and a lover of abstract discussions; and no one who talked to him for long failed to be pleased with his hearty simplicity and untutored outlook upon life.

"We don't see many visitors here, sir," he said

to Lauder. "The last we had'll no' come back, I'm thinking;" and he began to laugh.

"Who was that?" Richard asked.

"The Methodist meenister that came last Sabbath to preach to the men. Man, Mr. Richard, sir, I had an awfu' time wi' them. This kind of a travelling preacher—Mills, they call him—came down unexpected-like in the afternoon, and asked would we like a sairvice. Ye should have seen his face when he saw the place! 'Where'll we hold the sairvice?' says he. 'Wait a minute,' says I, 'I'll rig up a bit of a desk for you;' and I made him a wee pulpit out of your chair and some packing-cases. 'Where's the men, Mr. Macneil?' says he. 'Never fear, sir,' says I, 'I'll fetch them in to you;' and I went off to the big cabin where they were all sittin' round the fire at their beer. 'Come on, men,' says I, 'here's Mr. Mills come all the way from Trynack to hold a sairvice to you.' Not a bit of them would come, and some o' thae Cockney laborers began grumblin'. I didn't want any trouble, y' understan', so I just went in among them wi' my fists, and bowled over the fairst o' them that spoke. Just while I was in the thick of them, in looks Mr. Mills at the door. 'Man, Mr. Macneil,' says he, 'this is terrible work!' 'Away ye go, Mr. Mills,' says I, 'this is no place for you; away ye go, sir, and I'll have them all out to you.' And sure enough out they came like a

flock o' sheep, and sat pairfectly quiet through the preaching. Man, ye should ha' seen yon meenister's face! But I mind the last word he said to me when he was going away. He gave me a look, an' he gripped ma han', and 'Man, Mr. Macneil,' says he, 'you're as good an evangelist as St. Paul was!' 'Ay, sir,' says I, 'and p'raps a wee bit more effecshual!'" And the man's great frame shook with laughter.

"I've a note from London, Mr. Richard," he said presently. "They want me to go to the Saints as soon as I'm through here, to see after the repairs to the fog-signal."

"The Saints?" said Lauder. "Let me see; that's south of the Scilly Isles, isn't it?"

"South of everywhere," said Richard; "the loneliest place I was ever in. I call it the 'Saints' Everlasting Rest,' because the wild weather there delays the reliefs so long. They sent me there on my first offshore job, to make some drawings for the fog-signal. I was new to rock stations then, and rock light-keepers; and I tell you, it got on my nerves. There were only me and the three keepers, the lighthouse, and about half an acre of weedy rock to scramble about on at low water; at high water the sea is around the tower. For the first week I liked it; it was so fresh and salt and lonely and bright, too; but after that — my God, I can remember it now! The keepers had all been off a long time, for they'd had a bad

winter and the reliefs were delayed; and they were all in a state of nerves. Two of them wouldn't speak to one another — hadn't spoken for six months; and the third was so queer and sensitive through being alone so much that he wasn't like an ordinary man. If I spoke a little sharply to him — or rather, if I didn't speak with elaborate kindness — he used to go away by himself and cry — yes, cry. I tell you, it was no joke to be there on that scrap of rock, in the bright sunshine, with nothing visible all around you but sea and sky, in the midst of a deathly silence of everything but the birds wailing about the tower, and the tide swirling and growling past the reef, and men who cried if you spoke to them! By the time I'd been there a fortnight I could have gone and cried myself."

"What on earth did they cry for?" asked Lauder.

"Well, ye see, Mr. Lauder," said Macneil, "light-keepers is no' like other folks. They live a kind of an unnatural life, at any rate on rock stations, and they've no' enough to occupy their minds. And when ye sit day after day, and week after week, and month after month, opposite a man at table in a room half the size of this, ye're vera liable to take a kind of a dislike to the way he eats his food, or the way he walks, or the way he speaks; and then there's nothing to speak about. Half the time they've nothing to say, and

the other half they'll no' speak till one another. And then, what the men on the rock don't do, the wives ashore do for them. Jealousy, quarrelling, spying, talebearing, takin' offence at one thing or another — the principal keeper's wife jealous o' the clothes the assistant's wife wears — tut, man, Mr. Lauder, sir, ye'd be fair made seeck with their ways. Women's either angels or deevils, in my opinion, sir; just the one thing or the other!"

They all laughed.

"Well, you must hear some queer yarns on these lonely lights," said Lauder. "I should think there's a good deal of human nature sitting about in light-rooms every night."

"Ye may say that, sir," said Macneil. "There's no' anything out o' the way in the English lights, though Mr. Richard'll maybe tell ye different; but up in the north — that's where the loneliness comes in; and they superstetious Highlanders — man, you'd be surprised the things they do!"

"What do they do?" asked Lauder with interest.

"Well," said Macneil, "I mind when I was in the Scotch sairvice, there was a man o' the name o' Mackintosh — a queer, red-bearded giant of a man, who was assistant keeper on Muckle Flugga light, right in the north o' the Shetlands, with a terrible wast o' sea stretching away to the North

Pole, or thereabouts. Presently the principal keeper asked to have him removed somewhere else; and wouldn't give any reason, but that he couldn't bide there himsel' if the man wasn't transferred. Mackintosh was no' unwilling; and they sent him to Stroma, in the Pentland Firth; but he let the light stand for an hour there one night when he was on duty. God knows what he was doing; but he was sent away to Cape Wrath, which, ye'll understand, is a kind of a penitentiary in the Scotch lighthouse sairvice. Well, he'd been at Cape Wrath six months when I went there to put in some new bearings in the light; and the principal keeper, Galbraith, takes me on one side:

“ ‘A word wi' ye, Mr. Macneil,' says he; 'either me or Mackintosh has got to go.'”

“ ‘What's all this, Mr. Galbraith?' says I.

“ ‘I'll no' stand it any longer,' says he. ‘A fool I can put up with,' says he, ‘an' I can stum-mak a sumph; but' — an' here he blazed out in a temper — ‘yon greening, slobbering monkey of a creature I'll no' have any dealings wi'.’”

“ ‘What's amiss wi' him?' says I; ‘does he no' attend till his duties?’”

“ ‘Ay, I've no quarrel wi' his wark. But see here, Mr. Macneil, what sort o' a man is it that has never a word to throw till a dog, as the saying is, but spends all his time either leaning ower the balcony-rail, and spittin' on the rocks, like

a street arab ower a brig, or else standin' before the reflectors makin' faces at himsel'? Hour after hour he'll stan' there; if ye go up now ye'll find him at it.'

"Well, Mr. Lauder, I kind of laughed at him, but I went quietly up to the light-room all the same; an' I turned kind o' seeck when I looked in. There was Mackintosh, standing before the outside reflector — and ye know, or maybe ye don't know, that a reflector distorts yer face like one of yon meerors outside o' a grocery shop. Well, for maybe two minutes he stood pairfectly still, starin' intil his own eyes in the reflector; and that was an ungodly sight enough, in yon lonely place. But presently he began to tee-hee and giggle to himsel' in the glass; and then he give his face a twist. Christ! sirs, it was an awfu' sight! I can't rightly describe the look o' it; it had a kind o' a bestial look, something downright wrong and bad, and in the reflectors it seemed as though a' the deevils in hell was lookin' out o' his face. I'm no' a teemid man, Mr. Lauder; but rather than yon monster should have caught a sight o' me, I'd 'a' louped right through the glass o' the lantern. I whipped downstairs to Galbraith, and took a drink o' spirits. Mackintosh was sent away the next week, an' he's in Morningside Asylum now, they tell me. But so much, ye'll obsairve, for settin' Christian men on the Muckle Flugga."

"It's not a pretty story," said Richard; "we don't breed many of that sort in England, Macneil."

"What about the Eddystone?" said Lauder. "Isn't that pretty lonely?"

"Oh, no; it's like being on Southsea pier, with excursion-steamers hanging around all day. No; the Smalls, or the Wolf, or the 'Scilly Bishop,' or the Saints—that's all the terrors we've got."

"Tets, sir, they're nothing at all," said Macneil. "They're plesure resorts compared wi' Skerryvore, or Rhu Stoer, or Sule Skerry—God, sirs, yon's a wild place! There's some places no' rightly fit for men to dwell in; and I think the Sule Skerry's one o' them."

"The names are what I like," said Lauder; "you could tell Sule Skerry wasn't a place fit for a dog, by the very sound of it!"

Richard smiled and took down a lighthouse directory. "If you take some of the Scotch lights in their order at random," he said, "you'll get a real poem, and a real series of pictures. Listen to this; I'll read them out of the book in their order, only I'll divide them into lines so that they scan:

**"Inchkeith, Fidra, Girdleness, Buchanness,
Covesea Skerries, Taret, Stroma Hell-yar-Holm!
Auskerry, Scadden, Scroo, Muckle Flugga, Sule Skerry,
Unst, Cape Wrath, Rhu Stoer and Ushenish!"**

“Gorgeous!” said Lauder; “it makes one feel all tired and buffeted by storms to hear the names. They are like Nature’s oaths.”

But Macneil was vastly amused. “Well, yon’s one way o’ makin’ poetry,” he said; “but it’s no’ vera respectful-like to the Board. Well, sirs, I must be off and see what yon loafers are up to. I’ll maybe see you again, sir.”

“I begin to envy you your profession, Grey, and the people it makes. There’s a type produced by every occupation; and I like the lighthouse type.”

“Oh, Macneil’s an exception — but he is of the type, although at its best. Yes; it’s not a bad trade; the accessories are picturesque enough.”

They sat and smoked for awhile in silence, listening to the singing of the wind and the dashing of the rain. Presently Lauder’s eyes wandered to the book-shelves, and he became interested.

“Let me see what you’ve got: — R. M. Ballantyne, Clark Russell, Stevenson, Hardy, ‘Hymns Ancient and Modern,’ ‘Arabian Nights,’ Taine, Carlyle, Bernard Shaw, The Holy Bible, Pecelet — Who’s Pecelet? I never heard of him” — and he got up and took the book down. “Ah, ‘*Traité de l’Eclairage*’ de M. Pecelet — a charming title, but not much in my line. I like M. Pecelet, though; he’s got a good name.”

“And he wrote a really good book, which is

more to the point. It's shop, of course, but it's as interesting as a novel. I see you looking at old Robert Stevenson's account of Bell Rock Lighthouse: now, there's a book! His grandson could write, I admit — 'Treasure Island's' on the lower shelf — but he never wrote anything better than that. A great big quarto, consisting of a minute account of every day's work for four years — what the weather was like, where the wind was blowing from, what sort of sea there was, how many fathoms cable they had out on the moorings of the tender, how John this sprained his ankle, or Jaimie that let go the guy-ropes of the crane — oh, it's awfully good. It's the classic of its kind. And then his son Alan, who built the Skerryvore, tried to do the same thing again; but his book isn't half so good. Of course the Skerryvore is the swagger rock light, but they had the experience of Smeaton and old Stevenson to go on when they built it; so there's a bit of second-hand about Alan's book. He tried to make it just as fat as his father's, and had it printed in very big type, and padded it out all he knew — and even then he had to bind up his 'Notes on Illumination' with it. He tried to work the same attitude about the solemnity and danger, and Almighty God, and all the rest of it, that had come so naturally to his father; but it doesn't somehow ring true. The first man was an artist and a pioneer, and wrote like one; the son was

just a clever engineer, and the romantic touch didn't come off. All the same, those two quartos ought to be in every library worth the name — if it was only for the sake of their connection with a great family of craftsmen.”

“There's something fascinating about families that work consistently at one trade,” said Lauder — “like the glass-blowers of Murano; and what a pity that Robert Louis Stevenson chucked the family business! In that case he wouldn't have poured out his soul in books and made the world echo with his feelings,” he added, grimly.

“Why, you don't mean to say you don't like his books?”

“Well, I believe them to be good; but they've been spoiled for me by this noise his friends make about him and his woes and courage. If it is fair to judge authors by the people who praise them most, Stevenson comes off badly. He is belauded too much by two classes: the people, his inferiors, to whom he wrote occasional letters, and who find themselves in the index of his books; and the people who, every time they bought his books, felt that they were contributing toward his travelling expenses to Samoa.”

“Really? But how many of his books have you read?”

“I've read two, I think — the two best,” answered Lauder.

“Well, then,” said Richard, “you're talking

without knowledge. Stevenson is the one author I know of whom it is true to say that until you have read the last word of the last book he ever wrote, you can't judge him; because the man himself is only to be found in the bulk of his work. As for his friends—we won't fall out about them."

"I see that you're one of them," said Lauder with a wry face.

"Of course I am," answered Richard with spirit, "and so would you be, if you weren't prejudiced by something that has nothing to do with his work. Why should you, a stranger, demand that an author's friends as well as his books should all be delightful to you? Anyhow," he added with a smile, "remember that I'm only one of the people who know him; not one of the people that 'knew' him!"

"Honestly, Grey, I believe that's where the difference lies. 'I knew Stevenson, you know,' is a conversational opening I have learned to dread."

"Well, anyhow, you're clearly one of the people who don't know him; so you'd better lie low until you've read some more."

The two men sat and smoked for a little while in silence, hearkening to the gusts of wind and the rain dashing on the window, Richard smarting a little under the sense of helplessness to prove the case of his favorite author, Lauder a little surprised at this display of book enthusiasm

on the part of the out-of-door man. His curiosity was aroused. The choice of books on the shelves hardly interested him — they were the commonplace choice of a lonely young man of Richard's generation and circumstances; but his enthusiasm for them seemed to be of a rather unusual and non-literary kind: he seemed to see the books rather as living expressions of personality than as performances of art.

"I like quarrelling about books," resumed Richard; "it heightens one's appreciation of a thing to defend it. From the way your eye roves over my modest bookcase I should think there's a good chance of my liking all my books better before you go away." He rose and walked to the bookcase, took down a volume, and put it on the table. "Now then; we'll have a Day of Judgment, and make two heaps — the sheep and the goats. 'Man and Superman?'"

"With the goats!" said Lauder; "as you love your sheep, put that fellow with the goats!"

Richard, taken by surprise, looked first astonished, and then amused, as he laid the book down.

"Man and Superman?" said Lauder, derisively; "mischief and supermischief! Clever, if you like; as clever as it can be, but futile with the futility of a busy ape. It's all destructive: he takes the machinery of life to pieces, litters the floor with it, dances on it, and shouts to the harmless, necessary burgess, 'Look, I have unmade the world!'"

"Giving him a horrid shock, of course," said Richard. "And that is just what he means to do."

"And what would he achieve? Who is going to put the machinery together again?"

"Bernard Shaw, of course."

"Exactly. And do you want to live in a Jaeger world? No, my dear Grey, don't, I beseech you, be deceived by the passion for subversion. I've read every word the man has published, and been charmed and absorbed and fascinated; but I can't find words to tell you how untrue the essence of it is. It is outside life and humanity. He's the serpent in the tangled garden of this world, and would like to have us all out into the wilderness of intellectual perfection. He offers you the apple; but don't tell me that you take it!"

"The apple's all right, Lauder; it's your digestion, I'm afraid, that's not quite strong enough for it. I don't know, of course, if you hold conventional views about life; I should be very much surprised to learn that you did; but when you look around you on our social ruin and disorder, can you honestly deny what he says? It is because he is really clear-headed and clear-sighted, and sees things as they are, that the whole world, which is bilious and squint-eyed, thinks him wrong."

"I'd rather be wrong with the world than right with Bernard Shaw," said Lauder.

“That, of course, is a matter of taste; but it is, if I may say so, also unsound and cheap. It’s bad policy, too; for it’s the kind of attack that brings the world to your enemy’s side. I have no sympathy with your aggression; on the contrary, I can’t overestimate the value to my generation of a man who will get up and say unpalatable truths with so much courage and clearness. But I quite recognize Bernard Shaw’s practical impossibility, because he is only a single voice, and a voice not tuned to the same pitch as the chorus he is trying to lead. A law of injustice has always governed the world, and if we could get enough Bernard Shaws — if that cry could be kept up long enough — we might conceivably get a chance. But because a man may fail from lack of supporters is no reason why he shouldn’t try.”

“But the fact that a doctor has discovered a cure for blindness doesn’t justify his forcing it on every one whose sight is imperfect. The world doesn’t want Doctor Shaw.”

“That’s the world’s attitude to every one who has ever tried to help it, from Isaiah and Ezekiel to Mr. Chamberlain and General Booth.”

“Yes, but my point is that Doctor Shaw won’t help the world. He is more interested in the dissecting-room than in the convalescent ward. His treatment is merely to replace the sanatorium with the cemetery.”

“Prejudice again,” said Richard; “it’s just

that attitude of yours that makes it so hard for an Englishman to do anything without self-consciousness." His eyes fell on the green volume, which he considered for a moment. "If 'Man and Superman' had been called 'Le Dieu Mortel,' or something like that, and bound in airy yellow paper covers, you'd have hailed it as a gospel. But because it hasn't the French ephemeral affectation, and has the English affectation of permanence, you are put off. When a Frenchman has written a book he tosses it into the air, while the Englishman laboriously dumps his on the library-table; one has an eye to the lady's boudoir, the other to the British Museum. However, we'll leave 'Man and Superman' among the goats, and go on. I'm enjoying this."

They agreed about Hardy, Marryat, and Dumas, who all went among the sheep; but over Henley, who came next, a difference of opinion arose. Richard was for putting him, unchallenged, on the right of the whiskey bottle, among the sheep; but Lauder protested.

"No," he said; "I'm sorry. I read my Henley, and I don't forget he wrote 'O gather me the rose, the rose;' all the same, that 'bloody but unbowed' attitude is impossible and can't be allowed. It's not decent."

"A little truculent, perhaps; but after all, how virile!"

"Truculent bluster. A man has no right to

make poetry while his head is bloody; it gets on the page."

"But hang it! That's just what we want in this kid-glove, pro-Boer age. We are getting to be afraid of the very mention of anything as real and red as blood, and Henley is to be thanked for having said Elizabethan things in Victorian verse."

"You mean, for having said rude things in polite verse. There's such a thing as sitting self-consciously between Victoria and Elizabeth holding a hand of each; but can you in that case blame Fate for its bludgeonings?"

"But that's just what he didn't do! He didn't complain; he bared his head."

"Woes and courage again! The bared forehead indoors! But, joking apart, Henley was a man who mattered; I admit that. He stood for fresh air and the bloody shovel to a generation of people fed up with the stuffy drawing-rooms and silver commemoration spades of the Albert period. But now and then his inspiring march became a goose-step."

Lauder relit his pipe, which had grown impatient of his eloquence, and resumed his chair. Richard was searching in one of the volumes before him for some clinching quotation, and the elder man had time to admire the clean-cut features, clear serene brow, dark eyes, and sallow tanned skin of the engineer. Presently Richard put the

book down. "I think we will put Henley among the sheep, if you please," he said. "In all the real battles he was on the right side. I should feel myself much the poorer without him."

"Well, I give in about Henley," said Lauder; "one can do that in his case without being blind to his faults. But, gad, what odd things books are! Sometimes they seem to be the only possible companions, and sometimes they seem like a kind of intellectual fungus or disease. And the people who write them! They are the most self-conscious performers in the world of art, don't you think? In fact, it is not art with most of them; they are artisans instead of artists. Journalists are the only real artists in letters—the best of them, I mean. They work gaily with the spirit of their own time."

"Well, they may be clever," said Richard; "but after all, their work isn't big enough. They are only amusing or instructing, and surely there's never enough of the man himself in their work to make it permanently valuable. I sometimes think that the most interesting things in books are what get there by accident—the author's view of life, and that sort of thing. After all, a man of genius is only a man whose sight is clearer than the average, and who has a knowledge of the relative values of things, and a sense of perspective. We can't all have the up-stairs view of life, and if we had, we shouldn't realize that, although

a thing a long way off looks small, it may really be big and important. That seems to me the real value of books—a sort of perspective glass for the majority.”

“You ought to talk to my sister about books; you and she would agree. She is always pitching into me for my frivolous opinions. And that reminds me,” Lauder added, rising, “Lady Killard told me to ask you to come to tea on Sunday.”

“Thanks, I shall be delighted,” said Richard. “It’s no good going yet; the rain’ll be over in a minute; sit down and finish off the sheep and goats.”

Lauder, only half-reluctant, returned to the table; and together the two men fell spiritedly upon one another’s theories; Richard entrenching himself behind solid opinions and serene confidences, rather purposely tempting Lauder to an extreme of destructive criticism; and Lauder wilfully exaggerating his often shrewd and often superficial estimates for the sake of the solid front of opposition he raised in Richard’s mind. He was intolerant of the unconscious insincerity of which he accused so many of the authors, and deprecated their attempts to make a corner in their particular intellectual wares—“a little booth-holder in a fair” was his name for one propagandist admired by Richard.

As they talked, however, and exchanged their half-serious views in the little wind-beaten cabin,

something other than opinion grew out of their conversation. Richard Grey, unused of late to friendship, found himself warming toward this man of the world, so well equipped with curiosity and mind; while Lauder on his part was delighted with the combination of simplicity and subtlety that distinguished the mind of the engineer. He led Richard on to speak of his work, which he did with sense and enthusiasm; plied him with questions, and rejoiced in the human, virile, and picturesque glamour in which he presented the scientific details of his labor; and, before he left, found himself unusually attracted by Richard Grey's personality. The builder of lighthouses, on the other hand, liked Lauder for his essentially clear mind, and for a certain wise-acre air with which he invested his charming cynicism. In a word, that strange emanation which we call friendship began to emerge from their conversation; there was on both sides a deliberate cultivation of the rare gift of intimacy.

They were too deeply absorbed in their talk to notice that the rain-squalls had ceased; and were recalled from some remote region of metaphysics by a knock at the door and the entrance of a seaman.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said to Richard, "but Mr. Macneil says the sea's gone down a bit, and he'd like to try to get off to the rock."

"All right," said the engineer, rising, and turn-

ing to Lauder, "you'll excuse me, but time and tide, you know —"

Lauder noticed the sudden change that came over Richard Grey at this interruption. At one stroke the reader of books, the solitary, vanished; and in his place appeared the workman, eager, alert, competent. As he hurried into his sea-boots the dog Rufus jumped up with a whine and stood at the door wagging his tail. Lauder watched approvingly Richard's quick movements, his careful eye that took in from the open door every movement of the men down at the boats, his general air of mastery of the situation.

"You'll come and see Lady Killard some afternoon?" he said, as Richard turned to go.

"With pleasure," he answered, "the first afternoon I can get away. So long!" And whistling to the dog, he hurried away down the path.

Lauder watched the two figures, the hurrying man and the eager dog, scrambling down the cliff path. The sun had come out, and shone the more brightly for the recent showers. Rain-drops edged everything and glittered in its bright rays. He watched the boats lurching over the swell to where the sea broke white against the rocks, and saw them make a successful landing on the inner creek. And as he turned away the chink of tools rose up, a bright chiming sound that seemed to belong to the sunshine, the breaking iridescent spray, and the glittering rain-drops.

IV

IN the garden of the little cottage perched on the cliffs of Poltesco Bay Lady Killard and her two guests were sitting out the heat of a summer afternoon. The sky was cloudless, the sea, for once, dead calm, shining and motionless; and there came a deep vague harmony from invisible hosts of bees that hung about the garden. Lauder was lying on his back, looking up at the sky through a hole in the brim of his straw hat; his sister Margaret had gathered her long slim limbs into a silk hammock, and lay apparently absorbed in a book; Lady Killard was sitting in a garden chair eating green apples, and pretending to be discontented with life.

The two women made a happy contrast: Margaret Lauder tall, lissom, dark, rather grave of face, and clear-browed under the mass of her brown hair; Lady Killard informed throughout, from her toes to her fair hair, with a kind of youthful crumpled prettiness that was crowned and distinguished and redeemed from insignificance by her pale Irish eyes.

“This sudden irruption of full summer is ab-

surd," she said. "Here we are, after days of cold east wind, suddenly roasted almost to death. And of course the garden isn't ready," she complained, her eye wandering over the somewhat unruly little domain. "It annoys me to see everything busy with a lot of silly green buds, but all behindhand. A day like this makes buds look foolish. And look at the waste of it! Think how nice this lawn would be if the bulbs would only come up instead of self-consciously saving themselves for next winter. Why can't we have hyacinths in June?"

Lauder spoke lazily. "Nature's nothing if not commercial. It's all barter and exchange — a bud for a shower, a flower for a day's sunshine."

"That's not commerce, John, it's encouragement," said Margaret, putting her book down. "I like things to be rewarded; besides, it gives point to a cloud to connect it with a flower."

"Clouds are the only things that make a sky interesting, and that's what they're for — you can't paint a cloudless sky. This brazen blue thing isn't a sky at all."

His voice tailed off into a sigh as he succumbed to the heat. The air danced and shimmered, even the butterflies seemed to faint in the golden atmosphere; the sea slumbered at the foot of the cliffs, so that there was for awhile no sound to mingle with the unending song of the bees' sweet labor.

Lady Killard broke the charmed silence. "Thank God for green apples!" she said; "they keep me alive."

Lauder looked at her appreciatively as she picked up another one, set her small teeth, pearly and even like a puppy's, into its pale rind, and bit sharply into it. "They'll probably give you pains," he said; "but I know now why they were invented. To see you bite them helps me to believe in another world."

Lady Killard took no notice, but looked rovingly over the garden, and again became discontented. "Green may be restful," she said, "but a garden as green as this is absurd. Where are the flowers? I thought I'd massed great banks of color all over the place, and where are they? Nothing but a forest of green stalks and leaves."

"Gardening seems to me a most inexact science," said Margaret Lauder. "How much nicer it would be if you could make the colors come in an orderly way—a blue month, a green month, a red month, a yellow month, and so on."

"—All your enjoyment in six pictures!"

"Ah! and that's the vice of your orderly mind," put in her brother. "You would even bring about a worse vice—the vice of mood in a garden. Give me rather a month of wild riot, everything coming out together—a thing like a Dutch picture, with a tulip in the same plot as

a larkspur, and sweet peas and snowdrops crowded into one border!"

"That would be like your improvidence."

"Well, providence is a great mistake. I've worked hard enough in this ungrateful soil, and, if Jane will let me, I'll now let the whole thing go on its own sweet way. I'd like to come in spring with a basketful of mixed seeds, sow them broadcast, and see what happens."

"Some would fall on stony ground, some among tares, and the birds of the air would get the rest," laughed Lady Killard.

"What are tares?" asked Margaret. "I've always wanted to know. I think it would be nice to have a bed of tares, and rob that foolish parable once and for all of its terrors."

"Go and look at the ranunculus bed," said Lady Killard, "and you will see what tares are; or ask John —"

"That is ungrateful of you; I have spent many back-breaking hours over that bed. Besides, as a practical gardener, I object on principle to a bed of tares. I spend my days trying to keep order in this garden, and it has quite enough tendency as it is to lose its presence of mind."

"A garden's a light-headed thing at the best," said Lady Killard, throwing away the core of her last apple, and opening her sunshade. "It loses its head over the bees and butterflies, doesn't it, Margaret?"

"The really sad thing is that your butterfly's an uncritical fop. He doesn't choose the best flowers, he only stumbles on them by accident."

"Anyhow, he has the power to turn a whole garden hysterical."

"It would make any one hysterical to have only one thing with which to accomplish your purpose. Think of it! no mind, no movement — only being beautiful so intensely that it goes to your head, and gives you hysteria."

"I don't know why you are talking about hysteria," murmured Lauder, whom the word had apparently roused from slumber, "except that it has a sort of garden sound. But it's a perfectly horrible word, and a perfectly horrible idea — a hideous practical joke only fit to be played on pigs."

"As it was once, if I remember right, with great success," said Lady Killard — "on the Gadarene swine."

"So it was," sitting up and pushing back his hat; "the only case on record in which pigs have cut a really heroic figure. I think I can see it — that mad swoop into the sea! It would have been unfair on any other animal; but the pig — conceive it! the pig, gross and sluggish, but moved for once by an impulse ignoble and ridiculous, but still heroic, takes a rollicking plunge into fame! It was the apotheosis of hysteria!"

A prim maid, who had been waiting in the back-

ground until this outburst should have come to an end, now advanced amid the laughter that followed it, with pursed lips and averted head, to prepare the tea-table. With the self-conscious gravity of the servant whose mind in the presence of her superiors is fixed beyond wonder or amusement, she set forth the cloth and tea-things with a religious and assiduous air, like an acolyte serving the holy table.

"I should look after that girl," said Lauder, as she went away; "she seems sensitive on the point of the Gadarene swine."

Lady Killard interrupted him. "Thank goodness here's tea, and I hope nobody will come."

"No one likely to, except Grey — you know I told him you would like him to come some afternoon."

"Oh, yes. I like Mr. Grey — he's got those nice brown understanding eyes, and the ways of an ingratiating child. Margaret dear, you'd like him; I hope he'll come."

"He's the engineer-man down at the lighthouse works, isn't he? He ought to be nice if he always lives on rocks and makes such magnificent things as lighthouses."

"As a matter of fact," said Lauder, "he's an uncommonly pleasant and intelligent fellow. I told you, Jane, I took quite a fancy to him the other day when I went to see him. He's as grave as a judge about anything he takes seriously."

"What does he take seriously?" asked Margaret.

"Oh, books and his work — I can't make out which he's keenest on. If you see him talking about Henley or Dumas you'd think he cared for nothing but stuffing in a library; but over his drawings and instruments, and stone lighters and balance cranes, he's another creature. And he admires Robert Louis Stevenson!"

"Well, naturally, if he's as sensible as you make him out," said his sister.

"I knew that would draw you! Well, you'll find he has many of your heresies. Do my eyes deceive me, or are those caviare sandwiches?"

Lauder, who could always talk himself into a genial humor, and who loved arguing with his sister, or indeed with any worthy opponent, was now quite alert and lively, and the meal went merrily. Their talk was the perishable nonsense that may nevertheless be so vital and entertaining in its own moment. They were in the full flight of some extravagant conversational *scena* when the click of the garden gate drew their attention, and Richard, followed by a deprecating Rufus, made his appearance.

He was made welcome, a garden seat provided for him, and the unwonted luxuries of feminine tea set before him. Out of his working environment he seemed to Lauder both a little more ordinary, and, oddly enough, a little more himself.

The anxious, intent look which he generally wore in the neighborhood of the rock had vanished; and in its place appeared the serene expression of one who finds himself at home in the world.

"This is really nice of you, Mr. Grey," said Lady Killard, "to tear yourself away from those wonderful instruments and drawings of yours. Mr. Lauder has been telling us all about them."

"And about the lighthouse," said Margaret. "I am half in love with your white tower already. Do tell me what you do when you build a lighthouse."

"Well," said Richard, turning to her with the engaging, deprecating air with which he generally spoke of his work, "there's really not much to tell about it. You'd much better come and see it some day. We begin on the lantern to-morrow, so the building is practically finished. You know we had an awful tussle with the Trinity people — they wanted to put it on Poltesco Head, where the light would have been three hundred feet above the sea. Much too high, of course; but they have an idea in their heads that you can't be too high. And they hate rock lights — I don't mind telling you, because they don't always build them right: the Scotch people are the fellows for rock lights. You see, it's all a matter of weight and resistance, and they don't always work out the thrust of the waves properly."

"It certainly must need more than mere science

to meet the thrust of the waves," Margaret said, smiling.

"Oh, no," he answered, "there's nothing that science can't do, if only you know enough. That dealing with the thrust of the waves is merely a matter of observation, and an infinite number of experiments; but chiefly patience and observation."

"And how much have the waves allowed you to learn about them, Mr. Grey?" asked Lady Killard, gravely.

"Oh, practically everything; because, you see, I've got my father's instruments. Down at the Snail Rocks last winter the mean thrust as indicated by his machine was six thousand and fifty for the six winter months, and for the six summer months it was less than two thousand. So of course I had to build for about triple the weight of the maximum record."

There was a pause. She looked out across the gorse to where the great blue plain lay flecked and wrinkled with its ripples. "I wonder if they have any idea what you're about," she said. "I wonder if they let you live out of mercy or ignorance."

He followed her gaze to where the foam was curling about the Snail Rocks.

"Oh, we've had lots of tussles," he replied, "and pretty bad ones. You remember the storm three winters ago, when the beacon was smashed?"

But the tower is there still, standing where we put it—and it's going to stay there, too," he added.

"But the beacon was smashed," she murmured, looking at him.

"The beacon was smashed," he repeated, returning her look with an assured smile; "but then its purpose had been served. It wasn't meant to last."

"It must be a discouraging thing to know one isn't meant to last," said Margaret. "I hope the stones of your tower know that they are immortal. I like to think that there are some human achievements that aren't afraid of time, and waves, and the forces that break things up."

Lauder's voice broke in. "With all due respect to your building, Grey, I think its immortality can be measured. I should put it at about six hundred years."

"About that, I suppose," assented Richard. "After all, I dare say it's a weakness to try to set up immortal things."

"Nothing that lasts can be immortal," said Lauder. "Even stones and rocks go down at last before things as soft as waves and wind. If I want any part in immortality—and I'm not sure that I do—I shall look for it in flimsier things than rocks."

"I wonder," said Richard. "You see, I've

never worked with anything much flimsier than rock and steel."

"— Or against anything much flimsier than waves," put in Lady Killard.

"— Or with anything more durable than granite?" asked Margaret.

Richard laughed. "Well, but what are these immortal things? You're all pitching into me, but I don't seem to have come across them much. You make me feel as if I'd been wasting my time. Do you mean"—and he spoke rather more gravely—"forces of the intellect, and passions, and that sort of thing?"

"You may call it by what name you like," replied Lauder with a gravity that he had not hitherto displayed; "but there's a force that has swept through the world since the beginning of time. You feel it everywhere in the world of men, pulling at your heart, gorgeous exaltations at its flood, and death at its ebb. You may never have heard it roaring, Grey, you've been so busy wave-measuring that perhaps you've never listened; but when you do, I think you will never get its sound out of your ears. It's all a matter of human masses; it whispers to you in a village and deafens you in big cities. It's the vital force of the world. My God, and what don't people do to stop their ears! They shut themselves up from it, and their hand loses its cunning; they build churches, and it comes in at the door; they starve

their flesh and their spirit, and only find that they have made sounding-boards of themselves. No, there's no escape, nothing for it but to take one's share."

There was a moment's silence. "Well, I've no doubt I shall come across it in time," said Richard; "but at present I've time for nothing more serious than granite." And he looked smiling at Miss Lauder.

"That's not fair," she said. "I haven't too much faith in John's theory of the human current: it doesn't always bear investigation. But to build a lighthouse" — she smiled and looked toward Poltesco Head — "that is work."

"Tell me, Mr. Grey, aren't you some relation to old Sir Peter Grey in Eaton Square?" asked Lady Killard, who thought that the conversation was in danger of becoming too serious for a hot day.

Richard laughed disrespectfully. "His nephew, unfortunately. It's rather hard that my only living relations should be Uncle Peter and Aunt Anne!"

"But why? I always thought the general was such an old dear."

"Well, perhaps he is; but not to me. He don't like and don't approve of me. I go to Harle Court dutifully every autumn, and we endure each other for a month; but honestly, I can't get on with the Early Victorians — I'm too near them, I sup-

pose. Talk of granite!" and he turned again to Miss Lauder, "I'd rather deal with serpentine!"

"But you know," she smiled at him, "I rather like the pork-pie hat and rakish feather in old ladies."

"Well then, you'd like my aunt," he laughed. "You'd find the rakish feather, a sort of emblem of a desperate past, incongruously crowning the pork-pie hat; and she pats her hair as if it were still in a chenille net, and is always putting her hand to the bosom of her dress to arrange locketts and trinkets that are no longer there. She's picturesque in her way; but Uncle Peter! I'm sure he was an inefficient general; and he spends his days now, having commanded men unsuccessfully all his life, drilling the servants, who are paid to obey, and who snigger behind his back at his Brigade Orders and Fire Drill; and trying to general the flowers in the garden — forming them up in quarter column and firing volleys of water at them!"

"Of course, it's the period you object to," said Lauder, who had been becoming restive.

"Now we are really in for it," said his sister. "Mr. Grey, how tiresome you are! You have started John on one of his most deadly theories, 'The Period'!"

"But what period?" asked Richard, puzzled.

"Why, the Albert Period, of course," said Lauder. He got up from his chair and stood con-

fronting his audience. "The period of South Kensington, the Crystal Palace, the Albert Memorial; the streaming whisker and flying coat-tail period; the deadly period of English prosperity and happiness. A good man unfortunately gave his name to a whole age of silliness — Albertism. It wasn't his fault; but the name sticks."

"Of course you always exaggerate, John; that period was the nursery of all sorts of good things. It was the golden age of the English home, for one thing."

"The gilded age of the Family Picture!"

"Let him rip, Jane," murmured Margaret.

"It was the age of shams and symbols," he went on with genial wrath. "People had no opinions; they had beliefs. They didn't think; they were thoughtful. They had good noses and vacant eyes, noble brows and weak button mouths; there was no youth or age — the two charming periods — only maturity; children were suppressed, and the makers of children glorified. Their minds were sombre and upholstered, stuffed with facts, and covered with an intellectual rep which was pompousness. Look at their works, their tastes! Frith, Landseer, Mendelssohn, Coper, and South Kensington! A long age of vaporish meditation results in — the Crystal Palace. Alas that limitations of space should make it impossible that the Albert Memorial should ever fall down and crush the Crystal Palace! Taste!

It was the period of the birth of self-conscious 'taste;' the age of the stuffed-leather binding, padded and scented; the age of the panorama, of 'views'—"

"The age, remember, when people stopped building houses in the middle of a town, and put them where they could have a horizon," put in Margaret.

"Let him rip, Margaret," said Lady Killard, mischievously.

Lauder began to pace up and down the lawn in front of them. "The Albert man was a terror; a terror," he repeated, with a smile which was meant to be sardonic. "See him flying, be-whiskered, be-coat-tailed, be-collared, and be-cuffed (it was the age of the detachable cuff), an unhappy, suppressed child on each arm, to hear an oratorio at the Crystal Palace! See him in the Home, pasting rubbish into a scrap-book, or turning the handle of a stereoscope, and looking at views! See him in public life, dull, vain, pompous, and timid, a bully and a snob! See him in science—a Lubbock or a Darwin—self-consciously looking at a piece of cheese through a microscope, and thinking he sees the wonders of nature; being thrilled by the daring of the impudent and preposterous bogey of Evolution, preaching sermons from the articulation of a flea's hind leg! See him as posterity will see him, standing in a public garden, thrilled to his very

whiskers by the sight of a sky-rocket, entangled and tripped up by his own coat-tails, simpering in an age of commemorations and rewards, memorials, fireworks, and detonations!" Lauder sat down and began to fill a pipe, and there was peace for a moment.

"What do you think of John in his latest part, Mr. Grey?" asked Margaret.

"I enjoy it beyond words: it's enchanting," said Richard.

"A pity it's mostly rubbish, John, dear," said Margaret. "It seems a shame to prick your bubbles, but —"

"It's not rubbish," said John, seriously for the first time. "Go back a little; how different the Regency days were!"

"The Regency days were only a period of banqueting: and what you call the Albert period was a period of digestion."

"Or indigestion," put in Richard, mischievously.

"You have hit it in one word, Grey," said Lauder. "The Albert man was always taking intellectual powders and dosing himself with syrups."

"Well, he was physically healthy, thank goodness!" said Lady Killard.

"I'm sorry, Jane, but that's just what he wasn't. In actual fact he glorified the dentist,

whose social rise he witnessed, and he substituted the doctor for the leech."

"Dear John!" said Lady Killard, "you are charming. Go on again."

"Oh, there's nothing to be said to scoffers," laughed Lauder, "except that the Albert Period was the age of the volunteer, the sentimental Highlander, Euston Station, and the invention of Scotland; the age of the whatnot, the occasional table, and the scrap-book — all for the accumulation and preservation of perishable rubbish!"

"And to heighten the tragedy, some really good things found their way into the scrap-books," said Margaret.

They talked a little longer in a pleasant desultory fashion. As the heat of the day now declined, Lauder lounged off in the direction of watering-cans, and the two women, with the attractive skill of their sex, led Richard to talk of himself and his work, until he felt as though he had known them for a lifetime. Accustomed as he was to a solitary and roving life, this little echo of the polite world that sounded about the cottage garden attracted and pleased him. He had a natural inclination, never indulged, for the society of women, and he wooed them unconsciously with his frank admiration, his undisguised pleasure in their company, and his desire that they should

like him. He never doubted their interest in his affairs, and consequently he interested them deeply with his talk of harbor building, voyages of inspection, battles with tides and storms, and descriptions of holophotal and condensing, catoptric and dioptric, fixed, revolving, and group-flashing lights. He had a profound veneration and affection for the Corporation of the Trinity, and a keen appreciation of its picturesque business. The two women were interested each in her own way. Lady Killard listened with the quick capability of the woman of the world to grasp a smattering of facts as to a great national undertaking; Margaret Lauder delighted in the contrast of intensely arduous and practical labor with the dreamy poetry and romance of those unsleeping eyes that open and keep watch nightly with the failing of the sun.

“The worst of my work,” said Richard, “is that it cuts me off from the world and friends. I might as well be in New Zealand half the time as in England. Of course I’m always running up to London, but only for a few days at a time, and I assure you I hardly know the faces at my own club. Now you, I suppose” — he looked at Margaret — “live surrounded by friends, and are always either in a whirl of London gaiety or else adorning pleasant country parties?”

She frowned ever so slightly, and arranged the lock of her gold bangle before she spoke, screwing

her mouth up with a severe, business-like air as the clasp snapped home.

"No, I don't think I'm specially gay. One sees people in London, of course, because the people one finds there are its sole attraction. As for country-houses, they are difficult to adorn. I go to Ireland in the early spring because I like hunting, but otherwise I am no great prop of country-houses."

"And yet," said Lady Killard, "they are the only places where one has a chance of really knowing one's friends. London's a drag-net, I admit; but the haul wants sifting and sorting continually."

"Well, I envy you both," sighed Richard. "You seem to be able to make an occupation of your friendships."

"They are all the business of life, Mr. Grey" — and Margaret looked at him now with a smile.

"Well, I've neglected my business," said Richard, "and I'd better attend to it at once. Do you recommend the cultivation of country-house invitations?"

"No, indeed, I don't. My real grievance against the country-house atmosphere is that it makes you think more of your acquaintances than of your friends." She paused and seemed to follow attentively with her eyes the smoke of a steamer far away on the blue horizon; and from it her gaze went on to the white tower of the lighthouse.

Then she turned to him again with a sudden friendly smile. "Besides, you have your work! I think I envy you that. I think if one had work like that to do it would leave no time for friendships, and hardly any need for them."

"Work's a jealous mistress," said Richard, "but it's only a mistress, after all." He flushed a little at the turn his words had taken. "I mean, it leaves gaps," he added quickly — "intellectual gaps, and that sort of thing. But still, as you say, I don't think I'd change my work for anything. I can honestly say that I love it."

"It must be a great joy to devote oneself to something so impassive and cold as that," she said, looking again at the lighthouse — "a great joy. I begin to suspect that you are like me — you love things that don't love you in return. It's a real bore to have one's affection returned to one over the counter, so to speak; it turns life into a kind of cash stores, where they give no credit."

"'Ah, take the cash and let the credit go,'" quoted Richard, laughing.

"By all means, if we are to be governed by Omarisms," she said, more gravely; "but our philosophy has surely got a little beyond that point."

When Richard walked away a little later through a path of purple foxgloves that the orange light of the sunset turned to blood-scarlet, he car-

ried with him a new and grateful interest. He liked these three people; he liked the friendly and intimate atmosphere that surrounded them; he liked the sense of intellectual peerage with them, the absence of sentiment. He realized that the social side of him was a little starved; in fact he realized almost for the first time that his nature had such a side, and wondered rather vaguely if he had any more discoveries to make about himself. On the whole he thought not; and thought so gladly, for he liked to feel himself full-grown and mature in the world, master of himself, and able to devote himself to the work that absorbed him.

And yet, when he reached his cabin and lit the lamp, and saw his plain and lonely meal spread for him, a vague sense of incompleteness, a timid discontent, stirred within him. He had forgotten it an hour later, when he sat absorbed over his drawing-desk intent on the working out of a new system of reflection, his mind involved in intricate problems, his soul drawn deep into the wells of pure mathematics.

THE sea is the great disturber. Nothing human can endure for long unchanged in its presence; no work of man's hands, or of his thoughts, or even of his character and qualities, but must ultimately go down before its eternal force; nothing of himself, flesh or spirit, but must thrill and change with the pulses of its unquiet heart. Its vastness is confounding, and towers over us, dwindling us to pin-points of unimportance; beside its movements, calm and punctual, laid out in cycles of the everlasting, the most majestic of our actions seem as petty as the fretting trill of an insect's wing; its storms hush our wars and revolutions; our deepest silences are audible in its profound calms; and within its age the twinkling moments of our life pass and disappear unheeded into the murk of eternity. Small wonder if the embodiment of world-without-end should prove no encourager of man's happiness or contentment! It is an alien to all our hopes and fears, a stranger to our warm little efforts and impulses, forever unmoved by us and our troubled consciousness; and only they who

go down into its cold heart and drown and die there can ever conquer its indifference or compel its attention.

Lauder, walking one Sunday afternoon in June on the coast-guard path that skirts Poltesco Bay, found Richard Grey sitting in a grassy niche of the cliffs poring, with eyes that saw but hardly observed, upon the runes and lines that the submarine drifts were drawing on the sea's smooth face. On Richard, as on all who dwell within its influence, the great disturber was at work, loosening his mind from the anchorage of contentment that it had found in labor, and setting free thought and wonder to float on the wandering currents of speculation. As the summer went on and the lighthouse grew toward completion it ceased to occupy his mind, and he was conscious of a slow disturbance taking place in the very roots of his mental habit. He did not know what he wanted; but his long talks with Lauder and his pleasant friendship with the two ladies at the Hermitage had sown in him a restlessness and discontent of mind that was very strange to him. He used to sit much by the sea in these less busy days; its slow movements, its traffic of stealthy tides and flowing waves seemed in tune with a mood in which he was vaguely conscious of the transiency and instability of material life. As he sat and watched the moving water he had an idle longing to explore its spiritual secrets, to

force from it some vital disclosure, and to grasp and examine some of those dream-like, elusive mysteries on which the fluent sea seemed to be brooding. With his nearer knowledge of the Lauders and Lady Killard a tinge of depression, for which he found it hard to account, often clouded the hours of solitude which he had formerly found so delightful; and from the calculation of weights and strains he would find his mind, as on this afternoon, turning to speculation on greater and more humane problems. The larger curiosity about life, delayed so long, was stirring in him now; and though he knew that life did not consist of one world more than another, and was just as real on his storm-beaten rock as in London or Paris and the worlds of which Lauder was fond of speaking, he began to feel that it held secrets which could and ought to be given up to him.

He was glad to see Lauder, for their friendship had grown during the past weeks, and they had walked and talked much together. They sat down together on the grass, and spoke, as they so often did, of the lighthouse, whose tower dominated the view of grim dark cliffs and breeze-ruffled sea of pure cobalt.

"I remember one of my father's sayings, written on the fly-leaf of the lighthouse directory," said Richard. "*When Commerce takes her cleansing plunge into the sea, we raise of the dust she*

shakes from her soiled locks towers to mark her path in the purer element."

"Yes, lighthouses are of the romantic family," said Lauder — "children of beauty and utility."

"They're practical enough, too — man's last outposts on the frontiers of his dominion," Richard said; "the last help we land creatures can give to our fellows who take to the uncertain sea; the first welcoming guides when they come back. They're so essentially earthly, too, for all we plant them in the sea! Stone from inland quarries, oak and pine from the forest, metal from depths where sound or smell of the sea has never reached — it seems almost impudent to plant things like that in the very midst of waves."

Lauder leaned back and looked at the white tower with half-closed eyes. "I like to think of this new neighbor of yours, joining the great company of lights — this youngster of the Trinity, a baby yet, his stone sides hardly out of their swaddling of scaffold! I went down at low water this morning and sat alone in the lantern; and from his crystal eye, vacant still though it is, and blind as an uncut gem, I looked out across the blue floor of the Atlantic and tried to read his destiny. All this summer is his childhood, you and Macneil and the others who reared him still hovering anxiously about him, perfecting his equipment, and watching his resistance to the weather while as yet he performs no service. He

was whistling a little tune in the wind, and in the strong sunshine storing up energy, I told myself, for the long dark nights he will have to keep watch when his nurses are all dead and buried. Well for him, when he comes to wrestle with the winter gales, that neither toil nor time were grudged in his making!"

"I see you think of him as I do," said Richard, "as a person; indeed I'm tempted to be sentimental about him sometimes. But oh, I have at odd moments a longing for him to be immortal! I can't think that tower will ever perish while the rock lasts."

"You builders are all the same," said Lauder. "Look at that fortress wall;" and he pointed to a ruined castle not far from the edge of the cliff, said to have been the house of a Cornish king, "twenty-five feet thick, ruined half a dozen times, and continually rebuilt by the mason, eternally undaunted by the ruins of masonry! Somewhere in a distant century I seem to see another architect at work on his plans, or standing on that very rampart directing the masons. 'My work will last,' he says. And then—a little falling of the rain, a little blowing of the wind, a little lapse of years and centuries, and another craftsman, looking at the rampart, purses his lips and speaks of the heavy cost of strengthening old rotten walls. A little disturbance of soil, and down comes the whole thing like a child's rickle of

bricks; and man, with the patience of an ant, turns to and builds it again! And like his ancestor he says, 'This time it will last.'

"It's just possible," said Richard, smiling, "we may have learned the secret. It wouldn't be human to believe otherwise; and anyway, what does it matter? It is more to the point that men should have been working with their hands for the common benefit on that wave-beaten fragment of rock — more to the point that the work should be of that patient, simple kind — laying one stone on another and placing courses of masonry on a true and level bed — that calls for all the most honest qualities of human labor. Day in, day out, through the months and years that tower has been in building, there has been just the one kind of patient labor; nothing complex or subtle; everything depending on sheer honesty at every stage. The man who mixes the mortar, the man who lays the granite, the man who saws, digs, hews, or harles — upon each and all of them the honesty of the work depends. As the dad used to say: *You may lie in your throat, and no one be the worse of it; to lie with the hands is to add a stone to the fabric of the world's disgrace.*"

They talked a little longer of the work, and then turned to making plans for the immediate future. Richard had to go to Paris, where the lamp and lenses were being made, to see them

before they were shipped off to the lighthouse. Lauder learned from him that he did not know Paris well; and they agreed to go together, and spend a few days after Richard's business was finished. They expected to start almost immediately, and to be away about a week.

"The light is to be exhibited in October, I hear," said Richard, as they walked slowly toward the Hermitage. "After that — what, I wonder? Another job for me, I hope, although it'll be too much to hope for a rock light. But I'd love to build a Skerryvore or a Wolf!"

"If you were a monk, Richard, you'd be a Franciscan. 'What have I done?' will be your death-bed preoccupation."

"Not a bad one, provided one has an answer! You'd be a Trappist, I suppose, and say: 'What have I been, and how have I made my soul?' And yet the gift of preaching is certainly yours rather than mine!"

"I preach to myself," said Lauder, smiling, as they turned in at the gate.

They had promised to walk with the ladies to Strade church — why, no one exactly knew, unless it were for the sake of the walk back in the sunset; and Lady Killard had an idea that it was necessary to keep the vicar in countenance at least once during her residence.

"It will be rather interesting," said Richard to

Margaret, as they set off in front of the others across the fields. "I haven't been to church for years."

"Four unbelievers! I suppose we are a typical company of churchgoers," she said; "and John the only convinced unbeliever of us all!"

"What am I?" asked Richard, laughing.

"I should call you a regretful unbeliever," she replied; "and Jane — oh, Jane is a timid unbeliever."

"And you?"

"I'm only a temporary unbeliever, I think. I can't help an uncomfortable feeling that there may be something in it all the time!"

"Yes, I know," said Richard, serenely, "but it's a mistake. There is nothing in it but a depressing and rather pathetic demonstration of human weakness and cowardice — and of the results of unhappiness, I suppose. It would be bad enough if people really believed in it all; but they don't. Its externals seem to have a fatal attraction for discontented women; but that's only because part of it is human and emotional."

"Well, that's surely a good thing, Mr. Grey? I begin to believe in emotion; it's like rain on the soil, that keeps it soft and ready."

Richard, who was not on the lookout for emotional leads, continued a purely academic discussion. "Of course, as a preparation emotion is invaluable — provided it's the real thing, and not

an artificial substitute! And one must have something to prepare for; you can't be eternally getting ready. And then the ordinary English parson is not exactly an inspirer of religion. I wonder why one dislikes them as a class."

"Do you? I don't think I do. I find them often quite sound. Look at Mr. Brereton here; no one can help liking him."

"I know that," said Richard; "but it's an impossible profession all the same. They are selling at second-hand what every one ought to possess new for himself—and selling it at a profit!"

"Now you're talking like John," said Margaret, smiling; "and do you know, I think I like your own talk much better."

Their walk was along the cliffs, through the little hamlet, and across meadow paths to where the church stood huddled together on the rolling land, like a small gray snail. All around them the air was as salt as on a ship, and across ploughed fields or meadows there were everywhere little vistas closed by the bright sea. Margaret Lauder was enveloped in the wonderful charm of a well-dressed woman—a creature of beauty and mystery, remote now in Richard's eyes, with her laces and daintinesses, her drooping black hat, her charming hands and feet perfectly attired. Her eyes seemed brighter, her skin finer, herself transfigured, body and soul, by the simple process of

taking off one set of clothes and putting on another. As she walked beside him, dispensing her grave smiles and kindnesses of speech, Richard realized that he liked her very much, and wondered, and perhaps regretted, that he did not like her more. They spoke of his departure in the coming week; to him it seemed a long way to Paris from this world of sea labor and garden rest. Margaret said she was glad John was going with him. "You won't feel the separation from your dear lighthouse so much," she added, laughing.

Richard's next remark seemed to have no connection with their conversation. "Will you be here until October?" he asked. "I should like you to be here when the light is shown for the first time."

"I hope so," she answered. "Indeed, Mr. Grey, I should hate to miss it; I feel as if we had something to do with the lighthouse; we almost regard it as one of our Hermitage family. Tell me," she added, "will you be glad when it's finished?"

"Do you know, I think I will, although I never thought I should be. But somehow I want to leave work on one side for a little. I'm a little jealous of it. While I'm at it, it must come first, and must be uppermost; and yet I want to do other things—perhaps to build other things. After all, one has one's life to build."

"I shouldn't throw up your work for that reason. Do you think one is ever building oneself

so much as when one is building something else? Ah," she went on, shaking her head and smiling, "John has been talking to you! I know John's attractive fallacies, but I don't approve of them. He doesn't build anything, I'm afraid; he's always making corner-stones for a house that will never be built at all!"

"Perhaps they are only *pierres perdues*," said Richard, smiling, and yet conscious that their conversation was taking an attractively symbolic turn, and that their words had a double message. "You know, the stones I told you about that we sink down into the sea when we are going to build a groin or a pier. One must have a foundation, you see; and who knows what a splendid edifice may not rise on John's foundations? Personally, I feel I owe him a great deal. We all have to build; and I suppose it rests with ourselves whether we build a house of cards or a castle."

Margaret looked at him, and then before her at the setting sun. "And apart from what one builds, it matters whether one builds on sand or rock, doesn't it?" she said.

"That's where John comes in with his solid foundations," Richard said, and they both laughed, and then fell silent. They did not speak again until they were joined at the church door by Lauder and Lady Killard; and then Margaret put her hand on her brother's arm.

“You dear quarrier of *pierres perdues*,” she said; and neither she nor Richard would explain the allusion. Richard was not sure that he understood it himself.

VI

THEY passed into the gloom of the little church just as the service was beginning; and as they stood during the Exhortation they had a full view of the small congregation. A sprinkling of girls gave it youth; the rest of the fifty people were principally middle-aged, sad-faced women, with a few bent and gnarled old people, and a few youths and maidens in the pride of life. The surroundings were unusual to Richard, and, in his sensitive condition, touched him strangely. The rough old Norman church, so long beaten upon by the shaking gales of that wild place, seemed well suited with its congregation of simple, hard-living villagers in an isolated country; and the hearty singing, the good manly voice of the parson, the sense of companionship, the cross and flowers on the altar, the pervading tones of the organ, and the glimpse afforded through the open door of glass-covered graves, and the blue sea beyond them, built up an effect that almost startled Richard by its power to interest him.

The beautiful words of the evening office came back to him with a new charm and hypnotism.

The moment he tried to think of their meaning applied definitely and literally to the people there in the church, the situation seemed grotesque and absurd; but when he ceased to listen in detail, but let the large sound of the whole drift in upon his ears, it suddenly became all clear and reasonable. The two rows of little boys in the chancel, singing breathlessly at a psalm chopped into very short lengths by a chant too high for their voices, were not inspiring ministers of praise; yet it was enough to catch but one verse — *When Thou hidest Thy face they are troubled: when Thou takest away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust* — for all color and music and meaning to leap back into the picture.

As the service went on Richard became conscious of two influences pervading the little church. One was a sort of human current that seemed to be established by the presence of so many people near each other. Standing up during the hymns Richard was thus acutely conscious of all the people around him, and especially of Margaret Lauder, whose charm was presented in a new light of devotional gravity. But more definite even than this atmosphere of solemn conviviality was another influence, purely feminine, that suddenly became embodied for Richard in the person of a woman seated a few pews in front of him. She was not very young, and as he only had a back view of her he had no idea of what her face was like; but

something in the shape of her hat, in the inclination of her head, in the fall of her hair on her neck, in the rather graceful and slow movements of her slim figure, expressed a personality that seemed to be the embodiment of this Sunday evening emotion. She was both demure and devout, and her inclinations and genuflexions proclaimed her a leader rather than a follower of ritual. Richard found himself watching her at any approach of the Holy Name, and taking a strange delight in the slow fall and rise of her figure. He did not wish to see her face: his interest in her was impersonal; but it was profound out of all proportion to the circumstances. He observed, moreover, that he was not alone in his sensations. As the sermon began the congregation settled down as comfortably as possible in the hard pews, and seemed deliberately to divide its attention. One-half was given to the tanned, capable face and honest brown eyes of the parson as he made his simple proposals for the conduct of life, and his earnest exhortations to honesty and piety, in order that all might meet in heaven at last; the other half was obviously devoted to human speculation. Young men fixed their eyes, each on some young woman; girls drew together with arms interlaced and their thoughts floating in the poetic romance of virgin friendships; children exchanged sweets, or snuggled up against their mothers' arms; and here and there a husband and wife put out a hand

to one another, and shared wordless anxieties or memories. The monotone of the exhorting voice, the mellow dying sunshine that flooded the building, the hard wholesome Cornish faces, the Sunday dresses and hats with their bits of bravery, the flowers, jessamine, carnations, or roses, taken from under the hot walls of cottage gardens — how eloquent they all were, with a pathetic and heart-breaking eloquence, of the smallness, the helplessness, the profound melancholy of human destiny! Like cattle huddling together in a storm, these toilers gathered together thus at sundown, nominally to praise God, but really to hearten themselves with company, to say a few incantations, to receive a little human comfort against the coming night, and the longer night of death of which our solar night is the eternal monitor. . . .

The voice of the parson broke in on Richard's hearing. "And lastly, God gives us all a promise of rest when this life is over. We all know what it is to have had a hard day, with the nets perhaps or ploughing a stiff bit of land; well, what is it that helps us to get through that day? Isn't it the knowledge that it can only last a certain time, and that at the end of it we are going to food at the fireside, and comfort and sleep? If there were to be no sleep we couldn't go on; if our toil were never to come to an end we shouldn't be able to do anything. But God means us to work, and He means us to live; and so Christ

gave to His people this promise, 'I go to prepare a place for you;' and that, with the other promise, 'There remaineth a rest for the people of God,' is an assurance that God will not ask of us more than we can do, and that when our work is over He will give us rest. But it is to His own people only that He promises that rest. Surely, then, we should try to earn it, by serving Him and loving Him and obeying Him; surely we should try to do His work on earth, if we would earn His reward in heaven; so that when all our toils and sorrows are over we may be with Him in that rest, and serve Him in everlasting joy hereafter."

Of course! It was all so kindly, so dead simple, such a pretty dream, such a gross unreality! The lulling hypnotism of such words acted like a sweet drug on the congregation, soothing and comforting their hearts. God only knows, thought Richard, perhaps they need drugs!

But it was the last hymn, sung under shadow of the imminent night, that completed the annihilation of his cold and detached criticism of other people's religion. Rested by the sermon, pleased with a familiar tune, the little congregation rolled out the first verse:

"Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally."

Even John Lauder was singing by the third line. He did not know what particular good fight he had to fight, but the sentiment was a sound one; and "lay hold on life" was simply magnificent, if they had only meant it! The fine processional tread of the tune caught up even unwonted voices to join in it. The first verse thus whipped in the congregational stragglers, and attracted the very young, who are ashamed to sing in church, to raise a sheepish note.

"Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face ;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize."

The second verse established the odd collection of voices as a coherent whole, and the tune marched proudly along. Margaret was singing, and Lady Killard also, in a tender soprano that made the devotional words like a caress; the parson was singing, and looking around his little flock in a sort of mothering way, to see who was there and who was absent.

"Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide ;
His boundless mercy will provide ;
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life and Christ its love."

Richard found himself drawn into the sweeping flood of sound; he felt the whole building thrilling with that disturbance, part sensuous, part

poetic, part of that hunger of the mind and heart for things which shall symbolize the eternal, which is often called religion. The congregation gathered itself together for the last verse; the organist drew out all the stops on his little instrument; every one sang his heartiest; and, supported on the deep bass of the pedal pipes, the flood of emotional sound swept through the church, through the nerves of every singer, through the open door into the sunset fields.

"Faint not nor fear, His arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee."

In the prayers and silences that followed, and in their quiet walk home afterward, Richard found these words echoing in his mind, "He changeth not!" What was there in the mere sound of the words that caught at his heart? He had been conscious when singing that line of a vague desire to apply it humanly; and he had caught Lauder's glance quite unconsciously resting on Lady Killard at the words "and thou art dear," and had wished that he had some one with whom he could share his emotion. . . . The whole thing disturbed him strangely; it left him very silent, but made him hover about his friends as though he were never going to see them again. He was reluctant to leave them; and when he

said good night there was a weight upon his heart, although he could not have told why. He had had no special conversation with Margaret since they came out of church; it seemed as if she wished to keep with the others.

Lady Killard watched his figure disappearing in the darkness and turned to Lauder.

“You must take care of him, dear John,” she said. “I don’t know what there is about him, but he makes one very fond of him and sorry at the same time. I’m glad he’s going with you to Paris.”

BOOK II
THE HOUSE ON THE SANDS

I

RICHARD'S knowledge of Paris was that of the ordinary passenger; it consisted for him of an hotel, a railway station, the Champs Elysées, the Rue de Rivoli, the Louvre, the Luxembourg, and an occasional meal amid the amateur Bohemianism of the Latin Quarter. Lauder's Parisian knowledge surprised you at first by its blanks; he knew none of the sights, he had never been to Versailles, he hated the Rue de Rivoli and all its works with an enthusiasm of hatred that was only equalled by his passionate love for Montmartre — that Montmartre which the English or American visitor does not know and is seldom shown; but the two Parisian worlds of art and pleasure, studios, galleries, and restaurants, he knew with the intimate knowledge of the painter who has turned man of the world. In both these scenes of life his interest was equally real; but whereas he was a practitioner in painting, and had the craftsman's serious and intolerant standard, he was an amateur of pleasure. He loved to look upon that hurrying tide, so often muddy, and sometimes surprisingly bright, that flows

through the European capitals; loved to study with an absorbed fascination the struggle, the labor, the painful toil of men to purchase joy in those gay markets; he loved most of all to be intimate with the sources and changes of the river of pleasure, and to trace in its deep and intricate channels those human tides that connect it with our common life and keep it, in spite of its terrible burden of moral sewerage, harmless to the sound of head and heart. And in the great exchanges of vice and folly, it was the sellers far more than the buyers that interested him. The buyers, whether they were gambling at Monte Carlo, stuffing themselves in expensive restaurants, or lavishing their money on momentary and unsatisfactory love, were as a rule more grotesque than pathetic in his eyes; he had no pity for their folly and no mercy on their stupidity. But the other side — the world of sad-faced *croupiers*, of sedulous *maitres d'hôtel*, of *demi-mondaines* and actresses — he loved it whole-heartedly. He was known in that world throughout Europe; and although he was neither rich nor extravagant but merely generous, he was welcomed with open arms and honest affection in many a place where a welcome would not be thought highly of by the orderly world. He had a touch that opened all doors of a certain kind to him; upon his entry into famous restaurants waiters would be sent flying, the best table prepared, the choicest flowers

produced, the secrets of the cellar revealed, the chef advised, and the whole costly machinery given an extra spin in order that he might have his cutlet, while the American millionaire was kept waiting to order his nine courses. The *patron* always had a word for him, the chef's compliments would be sent up, and while he smoked a cigarette the exquisite and debonair chief of the *maitres d'hôtel* would be in deep converse with him — not as to the year of the Corton, but as to his difficulties with his family and his hopes for the little farm he meant to buy when he retired.

And so also in the great shifting banquet of beauty and pleasure he was known and liked and respected, if not loved; for the true coin of love is in that world of counters held far more dearly than we hold it, and its liking is worth having. Lauder had far too clear a brain and too much intellectual fearlessness to be shocked or dismayed by the simple fact that such a world and such a profession existed: he had, on the contrary, an Alexandrian respect for it, when it was cleanly and decently conducted; and he liked to watch the eternal struggle between it and society. He looked upon it as a fair fight. He knew that the social attitude toward so-called vice was the right and only possible one, and if society could stamp it out, that it would be right to stamp it out. But he also recognized in it a grim fact of life, which

society dare not recognize, but which nevertheless sought for and held its footing in the world. As for the women of the *demi-monde*, he made no secret of the fact that he liked them, those at any rate who had a genius for their calling and a sense of dignity and behavior in it; and he esteemed them far more highly than actresses who took their art seriously. The moral actress, he used to say, was the most pitiable and indecent figure in the world. Richard Grey and he had a long argument on this subject, in which the fight was for an ideal of decency. They were walking the deck of the Calais boat, and the subject had been started by the sight of a rather well-known actress established on deck-chairs with her husband and three children.

"It's all very well, Lauder," said Richard, "I haven't any false ideas about virtue and vice being anything to do with celibacy or monogamy; but I don't see how a woman can be less decent because she sticks to her husband."

"It's not indecent that she should stick to her husband; but it is improper that she should parade a quality that has nothing to do with her profession. Besides, if she is a good mother and a true wife, she's no good as an actress; and of course she isn't."

"Oh, of course," said Richard; "this is the old cry — that no actress can be a pure woman!"

"It isn't that an actress *can't* be a pure woman;

it is that she has no business to be; or if she has a weak tendency toward moral virtue, she ought to conceal it like a vice. Her acting ought to come to her rescue; and if it doesn't she ought to choose another profession."

"That's all right," said Richard; "but an actress is only a channel, an agent. I hate all their talk about actors 'creating' characters. They don't — they purvey them. Therefore, when they aren't being galvanized into action, they ought to be allowed to relapse if they like — even if their amusement take the form of domestic virtue."

"Oh, well, if you're going to allow domestic virtue to become the relaxation of actresses, you will not only spoil the pleasures of a great many worthy, respectable people, but you'll make Domestic Virtue take the place of the domestic virtues, which other people cultivate with some knowledge and finesse."

"I see," replied Richard, "what you are worrying about is not that they are domestic, but that they are actresses, and therefore the property of the public; and that with their beastly instinct for publicity they foist on the public photographs of themselves and their children. And of course no one is interested in their children, because one has no reasonable grounds for supposing that their children will be better actors than they are

— which, I suppose, is the only reason why they should be allowed to marry.”

Cape Grisnez loomed out on the horizon, a gray blur between sea and sky. Lauder knitted his brows and smiled as he gazed at the spreading shores of France.

“ Ah, that’s the country where they don’t permit any bungling of that sort. Pleasure is the one thing that the French take seriously; and their machinery for the flattering of the five senses is as perfect as their clever brains can make it. They recognize that the stage is like the Church; and therefore their actors are nominally celibate, and have to attend to business all the time. You don’t catch a French actress, any more than a French abbé, parading a family. They take themselves seriously.”

“ Well,” said Richard, “ perhaps you’re right; but what has all that to do with an ideal of decency?”

“ Well, we’re getting on; we’re getting toward it. We have established anyhow that decency, like truth, is not an absolute but a relative thing.”

“ But the truthful man doesn’t habitually lie.”

“ No, and a decent woman doesn’t habitually act, although all women act when they can, and most men tell lies when they must. It is the professional actor and the habitual liar who ought not to pretend to decency. Don’t you think that

the art of decency ought to be cultivated by people who are intellectually fit for it?"

Richard smiled. "I admit it is a delicate and patient art."

"Exactly, dear Richard; and how can it be rightly practised by people who habitually ramp across a lighted stage, and try to cram the whole of life into three hours, with music in between? Why, even nature rebuffs them; look there!"

A wave broke over the steamer's shoulder, and cast a glittering cascade of spray over the gaudily dressed family collected so conspicuously on deck. They emerged draggled, and giving vent to plaintive exaggerated cries.

"Nature's always coming to the rescue of your arguments," said Richard, as the two men turned away to hide their smiles. The sight of the Calais breakwater reminded him suddenly of his tall white tower standing immovable in the spray and sunshine of the seashore far away; and he reflected with gratitude that the things he loved best could never be made ridiculous.

There was a good deal of temperament mixed up with Lauder's theories of life. An intimate friend of his had once described him as "the Puritan rake;" and it really described him, in so far as such paradoxes are descriptive. He was far from bloodless, but he was no lover of indiscriminate pleasures, and in his contemplation of them was doubtless mingled some satisfaction in

his own attitude of aloofness, and some Puritan sense of superiority in the thought that, although they might be good enough for other people, they were not good enough for him, and that he was elected to a greater destiny. It is a strange thing, this sombre and gloomy strain that still persists in the English after so many generations have come and gone; for lofty, austere, and admirable as it is, and invaluable as an influence of stiffening and enduring qualities, it remains incapable of mingling with the fabric of a more highly colored life; and in the fabric of Lauder's life it was twisted up with, but hopelessly distinct from, the golden thread of an almost Greek worship of youthful and sensuous pleasure.

And it was a strange chance that made him Richard's Grey's guide to the pleasures of Paris. For if Lauder was a Puritan rake, Richard was by nature an ascetic amorist. The very same qualities that made him whole-heartedly devoted to his work turned him, when the time came, to an equally whole-hearted devotion to pleasure. He was always full front to life; he never turned one way, and looked over his shoulder another; one thing at a time held all of him. Lauder peered closely into things, examined them with a microscope, saw too much, and recoiled from their touch; Richard saw only what was visible at one focus, and waded in breast-high if what he saw attracted him.

Paris welcomed them with a glow of evening sunshine and a full-blooded tide of life in her broad streets. Upon Richard, fresh from his long and solitary sojourn by the seashore, the quick and sounding tide of humanity acted as a powerful tonic; and the lights and spacious dignity of the streets, the continual brisk passage of carriages and automobiles, the great evening preparations for pleasure in cafés, restaurants, and theatres, excited him like wine. They dined at the Café de la Paix, and Richard tasted his first *caneton à la presse* — a great moment, by the due and quick appreciation of which he won Lauder's heart. They loitered over their cigars, and sauntered in the boulevards until eleven o'clock. What a throng of searchers for the hidden treasure of joy were there! The balmy summer night, the brightly lighted avenues of chestnuts, the lines of cafés with their crowded open-air seats, the hurrying waiters, the moving crowd of passengers on the pavement, the families sitting together over a *consommation*, the clerks and shop assistants drinking beer and eying every woman that passed, made a scene of life and animation that sent the blood a little faster through even the most jaded and weary veins. The two men sat outside a café, and allowed the crowd to hypnotize them by its endless flowing. Solitary women by the dozen passed across their view; their stereotyped air of invitation — skirt held up

with one hand, the other arm swinging, the hat tipped down over the face, the head held rigidly straight, the oblique glance of the eyes, the sudden glittering smile, the admirable acceptance of refusal or rebuff — interesting though it is for a moment, became nauseating immediately.

“That’s what I call vice,” said Lauder; “it shocks and frightens me. It is so hideous and cruel, there is so little happiness in it for anybody; there is only courage and the keeping up of appearances. And yet I suppose even these women find some way of making life tolerable — but how they hate their work!”

Richard sat with his eyes drawn along by the moving crowd, as the passing landscape of a railway draws and detains the eye of the passenger.

“Cruel, ugly, shocking — yes; but how interesting!”

“Well, this is vice and immorality; I will show you pleasure and immorality presently, and you will see the difference. It is when I sit in a place like this that I suddenly see Paris as the most ridiculous and grotesque place in the world. Paris thinks of only one thing, exists for only one thing. All day it toils and earns money, and builds houses, and prepares food, in order that at night it may devote itself to its one interest. It gets on my nerves. All those fine, dignified buildings, all its interest in clothes, what are they but the expression of an infinite respect for this ridiculous

occupation, and a desire that it should be conducted in suitable surroundings? Paris has the most perfect system of passenger transit in Europe — in order that Jacques may get to Marie as quickly and as cheaply as possible. Paris invented the *petit bleu* — in order that for twopence Marie might tell Jacques not to come, as her husband had returned. Paris discovered absinthe as a national drink — in order that Jacques's nerves might be pulled together. Look at the shop windows; look at the picture-galleries; look at the literature, at the drama, at the music — what is it that absorbs and interests everybody? God! the whole place is like a Phallic temple." He smiled. "It's funny, Richard; it's damned funny; but it's something else as well: it's frightful!"

"You mean because it's artificial?"

"Because it is so truly indecent. I don't care twopence about its immorality, — morality is only an underbred substitute for decency, — but it's so shamelessly indecent! It is this businesslike pursuit on the part of the French of something that ought to be private and accidental; it's like trawling for butterflies out of a thousand-horsepower airship."

"My sensation about the whole thing is a curious one," said Richard. "I can't say it offends me: I'm much too interested to be offended; but I feel somehow out of it, as if I were another

kind of animal, as if I'd no business to be here. It's not the thing itself, but my presence, that is indecent. I have the same feeling that I have always had when I have looked in at a glass-fronted beehive — a feeling of profound impertinence."

"I know what you mean, but you'll get over that. Keep your air of detachment as long as you can — you'll see more. I got to know this particular world too gradually, and got used to it; one should come upon it suddenly, as you are doing. And now for your first glimpse of Montmartre."

They sauntered through the warm streets, past the hurrying crowds, until they came to the slope of the hill and into the quietness of the Rue Pigalle, that steep starlit alley where on the hottest night there is always some coolness and freshness in the air. The streets about Montmartre are always quiet at night, for its life concentrates itself within-doors; and when they turned into the Bal Tabarin the sudden noise and light and heat bewildered them. Richard saw before him a great room, with a gallery running around it, a bar along one side, and little tables everywhere under the gallery; a band was playing at one end, and the whole place was thronged with men and women. The floor was crowded with dancers; the tables were crowded; the long bar was crowded. The men came in from out-of-doors

just as they were, in hats and overcoats, in which they danced; and all the women wore hats and ordinary walking-dresses. A gay sound of talk and laughter rose above the persistent rhythm of the band; and the building seemed to tremble with the energy and vivacity of the dancers. It was a scene of real festivity.

“Heavens! what a difference!” said Richard, as he and Lauder stood in a corner regarding the good-tempered commotion. “How different from that sombre business in the boulevards — and yet the same thing!”

“Not quite the same,” said Lauder. “That was trade; this is pleasure. It’s only the absence of morality that you see in common. You must get that idea of morality out of your head, because it doesn’t exist in this world — and what’s more important, the consciousness of its absence doesn’t exist. That is what makes this kind of thing so utterly impossible in England. The consciousness of doing something wrong would make it ugly. Here there is no such consciousness, and everybody is happy.”

They sat down at a table and watched the eddies of a waltz swinging round and round the room. It was a festival of the people; there was no evidence of money there; the small shopkeepers, clerks, artisans among the men were matched by the small shopkeepers, assistants, typewriters, and theatre employees amongst the women. There

was no distinctive class of cocottes indicated either by dress or behavior; every woman seemed a possible cocotte, or else an entirely virtuous and domestic creature; it depended, you felt, on circumstances. There was a happy air of freedom, moreover, that was the reverse of commercial; and every now and then a man would go up to a woman, ask her to dance, circle a few times around the great arena, and then deposit her again in her seat with a smile and a bow. There was a much greater proportion of women than of men; but dancing seemed to be a much more real interest than flirtation, and half the couples were made up of women dancing together.

The two men let their eyes rest on the revolving mass, until they were attracted by some particular face, which they would follow around for a few turns until they were attracted to another. It is an endlessly amusing game, this play of face upon face; endless the curiosity and interest of discovering, amid a throng of strangers, the faces in which we find signals of kindness and beauty; endless the occupation, when once we have discovered the law of nature on which the varied attraction is founded, in looking for the characteristics that are the complements of our own, and recognizing them as they appear successively in each new face to which we are drawn.

"There's the prettiest woman in the room," said Lauder, thinking it time to live up to his

reputation as a connoisseur. He pointed out a dark, pretty girl in a well-made blue cloth costume and a black hat with red cherries in it. She saw their admiring glances, left the girl she was dancing with, and came over to them. She had charming eyes that sparkled with merriment and good humor. She put an arm around each of them and said:

"Il fait chaud, mes enfants. Allons boire un coup!"

They went over to the bar, ordered the orangeade, and listened to her interesting prattle. Richard, devoured with curiosity, plied her with questions about herself, which she answered with an amused and charming frankness. She was evidently rather a queen in the local world of pleasure that had its headquarters in the Bal Tabarin. A true *fille de joie*, she took no thought for the morrow, lived from day to day, and enjoyed herself. "I have several good friends," she said; "one of them pays the rent of my apartment. Oh! but you must see my apartment; it is so neat and elegant — *très chic, très bien.*" She was to be found at the Bal Tabarin nearly every night; she dined at the *Rat Mort* down-stairs, where the dinner, *vin compris*, cost two francs fifty; she supped — where any one was kind enough to invite her.

"We'll take her out to supper if you like, Richard," said Lauder; "but explain that the invita-

tion has nothing to do with business, and that if she has anything else to do we won't take her time up."

Richard explained — a little too plainly perhaps, for she looked almost offended. She quite understood: it was *pour le bon motif*. Then rose the question of where they were to go. Richard ignorantly suggested the Café de Paris, Lauder Maxim's, but she would hear of neither, and suggested a small café in the Boulevard Montmartre. Lauder protested that it was not smart enough; that they wished to take so charming a lady somewhere more worthy of her.

She shook her head. "*Moi, je suis Montmartroise,*" she said; "let us not go to the *Grands Boulevards*." She indicated her plain, prettily made day dress — her one garment of ceremony, probably — and said: "Here I am chic, every one admires me; there I should be dull, *triste*, no one would look at me." And with brilliant wisdom she insisted on the environment in which she knew she could shine.

They went to the Rabelais, and in its rather dusty and shabby firmament Marthe, with her two good-looking companions in evening dress, seated before the most expensive supper the place could produce, was a triumphant and glittering star. She knew every other woman in the place, and although her behavior was propriety itself (except when she put her arm around Richard's neck to

feed him with strawberries), she obviously rejoiced, in a good-humored and dignified way, at her success and the envy she was exciting. She laid herself out to entertain her entertainers; she charmed them with her accounts of her life, and with her sound judgment of the world; but most of all she charmed them, herself all unconscious, by an essential goodness and kindness of heart, a radiance and wholesomeness of character that shone upon and brightened the whole of her personality. They sat long over supper, enchanted by her conversation, and then drove her home to her little flat in the Rue Blanche. She would have been hurt if they had not come in and seen it. The place was like a doll's house: a little bedroom, a smaller anteroom, and a little box of a pantry with a stove in it, and all her pots and pans scoured and scrubbed and shining on the walls. It was all as clean as a new pin. They smoked a cigarette with her, and then departed with an affectionate kiss each, and a promise that she would show them Montmartre on the Sunday afternoon. "I feel as if I'd known her all my life," said Richard, as they came out into the street, and met the cold clean air that the Seine sends up in the small hours to renew the wasted atmosphere of Paris.

"That's Montmartre," said Lauder; "I don't know where else in the world that extraordinary atmosphere of intimacy exists. The sentimental

books that people used to write about the Latin Quarter tried to represent it; but that was a nasty domestic intimacy, all mixed up with cooking, and wearing each other's clothes, and getting drunk. They observe charming proprieties in Montmartre."

"Well, I don't feel a bit tired," said Richard. "Where shall we go now?"

"It's rather late for Maxim's, but I think we might get in. The contrast is one you shouldn't miss." They hailed a cab, and were soon rattling down toward the boulevards. "Gad, it's a long time since I indulged in this sort of dissipation; but if one is young and healthy enough to stand the late hours, and interested enough in one's fellow men, I don't know anything better worth doing in Paris."

"And do you mean to tell me, Lauder, that you live in this sort of world, and know it so well, without — well, is your interest always that of a mere spectator?"

"Good heavens, yes; it would bore me to go too deep. That kind of promiscuous amusement is all right for boys and old men, but it has no interest for me."

"I've always felt the same," said Richard, "but I thought I must be abnormal."

"I don't think so. It is one of the many superstitions of the polite world that promiscuous vice has a fatal attraction for young men, and that the

only chance is to keep the sight of it away from them. My experience is just the contrary. It is the life that is so interesting, and the people. If you look at the men who really support this world, you see they are all of one type — and a type that would be rotten in the most virtuous surroundings. I don't count Frenchmen, of course; it's the business of their lives."

The carriage turned into the Rue Royale. "I warn you, you won't like Maxim's, Richard. It's the most sordid place in the world — the last note of ugliness in an ugly civilization of money. I hate the place; but you ought to see it."

They drew up at the door of the famous café. For some reason it was open specially late that night, and people were still being admitted, although as a rule the entrance is closed hours before the place itself is empty. While Lauder was looking for change with which to pay the cabman, Richard stood by the great wheeling door, and watched, with a kind of awe, the double tide that streamed in and out through the great glass leaves. It was like a turbine, kept in ceaseless motion by the human current that sets toward pleasure. Money and youth and beauty flowed in; money and youth and beauty flowed out; and where there was neither youth nor beauty there were the imitations and symbols of both. As the two men passed out from the cool night air within the door they felt as though they were

being stifled. The place glowed with rosy light from hundreds of shaded lamps, which shone upon the gleaming table-cloths, upon glass and silver dishes; but shone most effectively upon the rows and rows of fashionably dressed men and women who sat at the tables, packed together like children at a school feast. Between the tables there was so little room that the waiters could hardly pass; yet the greed for places was such that the waiters were crowded and pressed upon, and had to push and burrow their way through the gay, glittering throng. Two men coming in alone attracted the attention of all the women; and Lauder was twice greeted by acquaintances as they passed down the long room looking for a seat. Richard had been caught in the crowd, and was separated for a moment from his friend, who was still searching for places; and as he was standing, unable to move, he felt his arm gently touched. A charming-looking woman, with sad dark eyes, exquisitely dressed, who was sitting at one of the tables, was looking at him with a smile so friendly, so recognizing, that he felt as though she must know him, and he was for a moment embarrassed. "Will monsieur sit down here?" she said; "I think I can find room for him." Richard felt himself in danger of blushing; he had never been rude to a woman in his life, and it seemed to him appalling to appear unappreciative of so much friendly charm expressed with so much refinement

and breeding. The easy rebuff of the streets seemed impossible here; and the exquisitely manicured and jewelled hand that rested so lightly on his arm was like the appeal of a whole sex for consideration and protection. Raising his hat he stammered: "Thank you, madame, but — I am looking for — I am with my friend." She smiled with the same charming courtesy, and turned away, leaving poor Richard feeling as though he had refused shelter to an angel. Just then, however, he was hailed by Lauder, who had found two seats in a sort of alcove with a raised floor at the far end of the room; and he hurried away to join him.

They sat down and ordered champagne, which they did not drink, and Vittel, which they did; and Richard noticed that every one in the place was drinking champagne, and that before every unattended woman who came into the place the waiters immediately placed a pint of that wine in an ice-bucket, which, if she discovered no entertainer, she had to pay for herself. It was the toll levied on all who came. Nearly every woman was smoking; there was a clatter of conversation which came near to drowning the band; and above the tables, what with the heat and the noise and the smoke, the atmosphere shimmered and shook as though it were on fire with passionate excitement. The women's hats, many of them admirable and expensive creations of the most famous

milliners in Europe, made a kind of bed of flowers hanging in the haze of the smoke; their gleaming necks and shoulders, dark-lidded glowing eyes, the many lovely faces, and pale, delicate, low-cut dresses of lace and chiffon and other flimsy fabrics, transformed the place into a garden of passions and pleasures — a garden of human flowers, on which diamonds twinkled and glittered like dew. In a cleared space below the alcove a few girls, the better to display themselves, were waltzing together.

“The Venusburg,” said Lauder; “and rather a depressing place, don’t you think?”

“I wonder if depressing is the word,” answered Richard. “There seems to be something poisonous about it — I don’t know exactly what.”

“It’s the winishness — the money and champagne that offends one. There is only one standard here, and that’s money. And look at the men!”

They were a curious crowd — chiefly English and American, all pretty much of one class — the monied class. Most of them had a sort of desperate demeanor, a defiant air of enjoyment, an artificial recklessness that mingled ill with their obvious determination to get value for their money. Most of them had arrived at that stage of the night when they had drunk too much champagne and smoked too many cigarettes; many of them appeared to suffer from headache; not one,

in that garden of the pleasures, looked happy or contented. Only the women — admirable, courageous dissemblers! — looked alert and interested, charmed and charming, and their smiles and laughter made a rippling mask of happiness that concealed the essential grimace of the place.

Suddenly Lauder's attention was attracted by a clear girlish voice quite near him.

"Hello! How d'you do? I never saw you till this minute, I give you my vord!" And a slight figure, wonderfully clad in palest pink voile, appeared before the two men.

"Hullo, Toni, my child," said Lauder, "how are you? And what are you doing here, after all the good advice I gave you two years ago at Aix-les-Bains?"

"Oh, don't be foolish, my dear; I'm not a fool. Here, I come and sit beside you — my friend won't mind. I tell you I had in Aix-les-Bains, *oh*, such a good time! I never haf so good a time in *all* my life! And lots, *lots* of money! Oh, money, my dear, how I *lof* it!" And she launched out into an account of some friend who was known both to her and Lauder.

Her first appearance gave Richard a shock of pleasure — she was so utterly unlike every other woman in the place. A kind of aura of youth and charm shone about her. She was small and slight, exquisitely made and moulded, with a small head poised over shoulders that a Greek

might have worshipped, and surmounted by a mass of tawny golden hair crushed with an appearance of carelessness under the roses of her hat. Her only bad feature was her mouth, and it, though bad, was fascinating. It was restless and tormented; the teeth were a little too prominent, the lips a little too red and moist. But Richard was able to look at nothing but her eyes when once he had met their gaze. It was her eyes that decided him, after he had noticed her mouth, that in spite of it she was not only pretty but beautiful. They were of that color that for want of a more exact term one calls golden; they were sombre and grave, like a wondering child's; but in their depths there slumbered a dull smouldering fire that held in it the inscrutable mystery of ages. Her face was seldom in repose, and the eyes shifted and danced about as she nodded and laughed; but in any moment of gravity they became earnest and scrutinizing, and the smouldering fire in them seemed to stir and leap up into a golden flame. She was perfectly aware of Richard's scrutiny, and presently turned and included him in her prattling conversation.

"How long you been in Paris? Only just come? I been here von week. Oh, no, my dear, of course, I'm not here on business. He is stupid to talk like that. I come for a little fun, I been very tired. What you think, I come here to Maxim's like dies other vomens? No, my dear,

you do not know me if you say that. I come over from London with two other girls. We go on to *Rat Mort* now. You come too?"

"No, not to-night," said Lauder. "We're sleepy; we've been travelling all day. Another night."

"All right. You come Maxim's again to-morrow? Then I see you. *Auf wiedersehen!*" And she floated back to the rather angry-looking man who was waiting for her at her table.

"Who is she?" asked Richard, as, having paid their bill and various tolls to *vestiaires* and door porters, they gratefully escaped into the cool morning twilight and walked toward their hotel.

"Ah, she's one of the aristocrats. Her name is Toni something or other, — I forget what, — she's a German Pole. I met her at Aix-les-Bains two years ago. She was kept by a Russian prince, who thought the world of her; but he must have turned her down, or she wouldn't be here. I can't think in any case what she's doing in Maxim's: it's not her world, or ought not to be. There's a certain waywardness and perversity about her that's rather charming."

"She a wonderfully beautiful woman," said Richard. "How old is she?"

"About twenty-four, I should say. But beautiful? I don't know that I call her beautiful, with that bad mouth." He yawned. "God, how sleepy I am!"

"I'm grateful to you for to-night," said Richard. "I won't forget it easily. We'll go to Montmartre again, but I shouldn't wonder if I never saw Maxim's any more. I've had enough of that to last me a lifetime. It's a shocking place. I don't like to think of your pretty friend Toni there."

"Silly little fool!" said Lauder. "Fancy that being her idea of fun and a holiday! It's worse than the 'bus-driver who spends his day off riding on the other 'buses. But thank God we're home. Look at that!"

They stood for a moment before the hotel door to watch the rosy dawn flushing the sky behind the Louvre. Men were busy flooding the streets with clear sparkling water, cold and cleansing draughts of air were pouring through the arteries of the great city, the buildings shone white with sharp outlines against the sky, and the birds were chirping and singing in the Tuileries gardens. It was a wonderful scene of morning and renewal, of the lonely coming of the unsoiled summer day that has none but sleepy revellers to welcome it. Richard's last waking thoughts mingled it with dim memories of the happy irresponsible gaiety of Montmartre, and of Marthe's kind *camaraderie*; and with a clearer vision of lights and colors and jewels, the flower-like faces of women, and golden eyes smouldering under a tawny crown of hair.

II

THE Bois de Boulogne on a summer morning — where else can you observe to so much advantage the comic efforts of an overcivilized world to untie its knots and smooth itself out? It represents the stage in perversion when fresh air and sunshine are taken as a whet, a liqueur; when all the heated, scented life of indoors has passed, and pleasure must be exposed to a different atmosphere in order that its lost flavor may be restored. The trim, watered roads, the groves of small orderly trees that make so pretty a feature in the landscape garden of Paris; the moving procession of men and women that drive round and round or walk up and down to exhibit themselves; the stationary mass of those who come to look at the show — in these simple circumstances you may see poor Hygeia, stifled and bleached by darkness, smothered under eider-downs and pillows, groping and feeling and thrusting blindly toward the sunshine and daylight that are her element.

Lauder and Richard were seated on a couple of chairs near the top of the Allée de Longchamps watching the fluent crowds on foot, on

horseback, and in carriages. Lauder was absorbed in the hypnotizing sight, but Richard's mind was a little in arrear, and in spite of the sunshine, the clear cool air, and the sense of health and vitality in his veins, the company of his thoughts was not all collected. Some of them tarried in the lighted restaurants and starlit streets of the night before.

"This is a different Paris," he said aloud, emerging into speech at the end of a long meditation.

"Not a bit of it; the same Paris. I know you think I have a bee in my bonnet on this subject, but look at them? You know the Irish saying — if you see a pig, hit him, because if he's not going into mischief he's just coming out of it? Well, that's your Frenchman. If he's not going to his lady-love of the moment, he's just coming from her — or else he's thinking about her or some other woman. It's the flat truth; and it's so simple and grotesque that polite English people won't believe you — they say you're exaggerating."

"Really, Lauder, I shall begin to think you are a Frenchman yourself. You've talked about nothing else since we arrived."

"And pray what else is there to talk about in Paris? I never think about it elsewhere, — we never talked about it in Cornwall, — but here it is in the air you breathe. Even the dogs have

a sly, preoccupied expression. Besides, my dear Richard, for Heaven's sake, don't be prudish, or you'll scare me. I want you to get out of your mind that it's morbid or beastly, — it's only in odd moments that it is, — I want you to see how really funny it is. If the whole of France is shaking with the antics of Venus, the whole heavens are shaking with laughter." And Lauder laughed himself until he infected Richard.

"Look at them. Look at the men, peacocking about on horses they can't ride. All for madame, when she drives by."

"I'm trying to think," said Richard, "what their riding reminds me of. . . . I know: it's the way they eat boiled eggs. They do both with an air of bravado, as if they were doing something devilish fine, and make an infinite fuss over both. I suppose you would say it was a kind of cock-crow."

"Dear, charming people! And they call them frivolous — the most serious people in the world. Look at their intent faces. The men so busy, lest they should pass a pretty woman unnoticed; the women so delightfully assured, so happily secure of their meed of attention! The plainest woman takes trouble with her appearance, because she knows that every man she meets will take her in from top to toe in one just, appraising glance. He will notice that she has an ugly face, but a good figure; he will notice that she has an ugly

face, a bad complexion, a poor figure, but that she has good hands and feet; he will notice any single good point she has, if it is only the way she carries her parasol. And it is the Frenchman's spider-like attention to what is the business of life in all its details that keeps the women in such a good temper and constantly occupied. The young girls are wondering how long it will be before their turn comes, and the old women are only sorry that their time is over. Isn't it funny?"

A family party passed in front of them — the father, black-whiskered, with the chest thrown out, swaggering; the mother, full-outlined, acutely conscious of her white costume and the tight, high-heeled boots that prevented her from walking properly; a little boy and little girl, grotesquely attired like dolls, their legs tightly buttoned up in leather breeches, their small wizened faces eloquent of pampered peevishness.

"Anyhow," said Richard, looking rather distastefully at the little people, "there are children here, and they, thank goodness, represent another point of view."

"Another point of view? You amaze me, Richard. Can you look at those two little brats and tell me they are anything but accidents? French children of a certain class are all either accidents, or they are brought into the world so that their mammas may have something else to

dress up. They then take the place of the poodles."

"Anyhow," said Richard, the more stoutly as he felt his conviction giving way, "they stand for marriage."

"The Parisian marriage? A toll-gate on the *route nationale* of indulgence? You pay your penny, and on you go!"

Richard laughed his surrender. "It's too fine a day to argue," he said; "but beware of half-truths! They lead to epigrams."

They stayed there for perhaps an hour, absorbed in the crowd of fashion that streamed past them in the sunshine, and exchanging comments on the units of that endless procession. Famous actresses and dancers, wives of ministers, leaders of fashion, great ladies of the world and of the half-world, vied with one another in presenting the perfection of modern summer attire, and in filling the avenue between the green trees with life and color and movement as they flashed by in their carriages. The whirl and rasp of automobiles filled the air with droning sound that made a background to the nearer chatter and laughter of those who strolled on the sidewalk. Of the thousands who walked and drove there, not one but had taken trouble to look his or her best; thousands of pairs of white gloves, so carefully put on; thousands of coiffures, that had cost so much time and thought—and money; thou-

sands of skirts, held in just the same way, thousands of parasols at the same tilt, thousands of wafts of perfume shaken out by the rustling draperies—to sit there while they streamed past was to feel as though a huge scented billow of foam and cloud and gossamer were forever rolling by.

But in this world of appetites, to get one's head above the billow was to get hungry. Richard and Lauder strolled up the avenue to the Etoile, and drove to the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, where, in order that Richard might see a bourgeois crowd, they lunched among a healthy and hungry Sunday throng at Marguery's. *Hors d'œuvre*, eggs, fish, fowl, salad, pastry, cheese, dessert, coffee, cognac—"How they eat!" said Richard, who was not doing badly himself.

"Of course," said Lauder, grimly. "Naturally—"

"Oh, give it a rest, Lauder," laughed Richard. "Not at meal-times, please."

"All right," said Lauder, solemnly; "but the Frenchman never gives it a rest, not even at his meals. He doesn't live to eat; he eats to live—and to live in his own particular way; it is his own saying. That's why he eats so well—it's an inducement."

"I wonder why, if all you say of them is true, the French are such charming people."

"Charming because they live entirely on the surface."

"But they're intellectual."

"Intelligent, you mean."

"Creative, at any rate?"

"Imaginative, rather."

"Well, they're alive, alert, vital."

"That is quite true. They have all the surface virtues, — intelligence, imagination, alertness, vivacity. Animation, in the true sense, they have not. Their lives are not informed with mind or soul at all."

Richard blew a cloud from his cigarette.

"You know, Lauder, I sometimes think you'd be all the better for a dash of French in you. You don't keep on the surface enough. Here am I, not wanting to talk seriously at all, and skimming about on the ice. You keep breaking through into the green depths. It's not fair; it's not playing the conversational game. We are either skating or diving — we can't do both at once."

"Why not?" said Lauder, feebly. "The same element serves for both."

"Yes, but the equipment isn't the same for both."

"Weights on your feet in both cases, my dear Richard." Lauder still smilingly struggled to justify himself.

"And your head enclosed for diving, so that

you can't hear! Now let us go, before you say anything else."

They walked into the Boulevard des Italiens until they came to the Rue Lafitte, that curious fissure in the mass of Paris at the end of which the Sacré Cœur can be seen white and imposing against the blue sky, crowning the heights of Montmartre. They walked on through the streets of shuttered business-houses, into the region of small dwellings, shops, and studios, arriving at last, rather hot and weary, at the Rue Blanche.

They were received at the door of Marthe's apartment by a demure and capable-looking young woman, with large melancholy eyes, who assured them that Marthe would be ready in a few minutes, and invited them to wait in the tiny ante-room. Presently Marthe herself came in, in a very becoming wrapper; she was in the middle of her toilet, she explained, and her friend Gabie was helping her. The two men were presented to Gabie, who divided her time between entertaining them with amiable and decorous conversation, and assisting Marthe in various crises of hair-dressing and robing. There was a great running about between the two rooms, and a great air of privacy and propriety maintained, which was continually stultified by Marthe's running in in a half-dressed condition, her dark eyes all glowing with mischief and merriment, to pat Lauder on the cheek or see that Richard was

comfortable. Gabie, with an infinite and good-humored unselfishness, kept herself carefully in the background, and acted merely as lady-in-waiting: now sewing on a button, now complimenting Marthe as she stood before the mirror with a serious mien, now running out to buy a veil, now keeping the visitors in a good humor, deflecting interest from herself toward her friend, and generally exhibiting a perfection of good manners that Richard found himself regarding with surprise in a courtesan — and one of a somewhat humble class.

“I feel like an unmannerly fool,” he said to Lauder once, while they were alone for a moment; “I find myself regarding every evidence of good taste or good feeling with a kind of priggish astonishment.”

“I know,” Lauder answered, “I feel the same thing myself. Of course I don’t believe you’d find the dignity and wholesomeness of life that you see here anywhere but in Montmartre, in women of this class; and we’ve struck a particularly good example.”

The two girls came back at this moment, Marthe in her blue dress and hat with cherries in it, Gabie in her plain black dress and a straw hat; but both dressed with an admirable precision and restraint as to detail. The pretty domesticity of the scene and Gabie’s charming disinterested friendship had pleased them so much that they

begged her to join them in their walk. No: she would not think of deranging them; she had engagements. But when Marthe added her entreaties she consented, obviously with pleasure only tempered by an extreme desire not to be in the way; and the four set off through the sunny streets to climb the hill to the Sacré Cœur.

It was a merry little excursion, full of high spirits and a gaiety which, if it was a little childish, was as wholesome and innocent as the summer's day. Everybody chattered incessantly; the girls showed them their little world of Montmartre, — the cafés where they breakfasted and dined, the shops where they bought their dresses, or where a hat was to be had for twenty francs that looked equal to one costing a hundred on the Grands Boulevards. Richard walked behind with Marthe, and amused himself by teaching her fragments of English and watching her purse up her pretty mouth in vain attempts to pronounce them. "Dites à John," he would say, indicating Lauder, "I love you very much;" and Marthe's voice would immediately ring out across the pavement:

"Jeannee! Jeannee! Ai — loaf — you — verree meutch!"

Another pastime which seemed to afford them endless amusement, and for some mysterious reason endless difficulty, was the pronunciation of the name of a famous American circus which was

placarded on the walls. Marthe begged to be taught how to say it, and Richard would carefully enunciate "Buffalo — Bill's — Wild West," to be answered slowly and painfully by:

"Beuf'low Beelsa wal — wets!" "West" seemed impossible; it always came out "wets," or at the best "wests" or "zwet;" and they had tired of the game long before the lesson had been learned.

They went to a café, and the girls, to mark the occasion English, drank afternoon tea of a weird hue and flavor. Richard, from a similar sense of environment, drank absinthe, which Marthe insisted on preparing for him, teaching him how to pour the water drop by drop through the sugar on the perforated spoon.

Then they went out again into the hot streets, now beginning to swarm with the idle Sunday crowd, and climbed again. They crossed the bridge over the cemetery. "There is Gautier," said Marthe to Richard, pointing to one side, "and there are Berlioz, Delaroche, Greuze, Offenbach — oh, so many," pointing to another; "and there are my father and mother; I also shall be here when my time comes." She spoke in an extremely matter-of-fact way, but — perhaps it was the absinthe — the idea of death suddenly struck Richard as being intolerable on that bright summer afternoon. Yet he could not help thinking how different the reality was from the popular

idea of the courtesan's death — the Hogarthian idea — with which every circumstance of sordidness and disgrace was supposed to be associated. Marthe at any rate would be sincerely mourned by good friends when she went to rejoin her father and mother. . . . Richard, pursuing a somewhat morbid fancy, asked her to take him to Gautier's grave; not really because he had any particular curiosity to see it, but because he thought it would be a strange and interesting sensation to walk through a cemetery with this little *fille de joie*; but she showed herself much more wholesome in this respect than he. Her distaste for cemeteries was the reverse of morbid; it was perfectly healthy.

"No, no," she said, laughing at him, "one does not go to such places unless one is obliged to."

It was not until after he had left her that Richard had time to wonder at her interest in, or even knowledge of, such names as Delaroche and Berlioz; and he considered how long one might hunt in London for a cocotte of the humble class who, passing Westminster Abbey, would be interested or able to take one in and point out the monuments of Addison and Handel. But of course, as Lauder had said, Marthe and her friends were of a species unknown and impossible in England.

They arrived at last at the Moulin de la Galette, walked through its toy gardens to the great hall

where the band was playing, and sat down at a table. They ordered the inevitable *consommation* and looked on fascinated at the picture before them. The whole place trembled to the tread and measure of thousands of dancing feet; the scene circled and swam before their eyes as thousands of couples made a revolving circuit of the great building, or eddied in smaller circles about one part of it. There was no sound but the persistent rhythm of the band, with the soaring melodies and languishing cadences of the waltz, the heavy dull beat of all the feet on the ground, the prolonged swish and whisper of the women's dresses. A slight dust rose from the floor, and there was a faint odor of warm human bodies and raiment. It was a scene of communal, almost of domestic pleasure; the sunshine streaming through the high windows in the roof lit up the gay dresses of the people of Montmartre, their husbands, fathers, sisters, lovers, mothers, sweethearts; family groups made holiday together; mamma danced with little Pierre, while papa, dressed in his best, dandled the baby; husbands and wives danced together, with a serious eagerness, as of people who intended to make the most of their holiday. Yet through the whole scene there went a wave of the gaiety without which no Parisian entertainment is complete; and the brighter dresses of the cocottes scattered here and there among the vast crowd wove into its sombre

fabric a symbolic thread of joy. It moved and changed, now appeared, now was lost; in one view you would see nothing but the black coats and hats of the men, the dark skirts of the mothers and sisters; and suddenly, as though a breeze had stirred the human surface, you would get another view, and the whole assembly would appear in a shimmer of love, shot with the many-colored draperies of pleasure. The movement of the whole threw a garment over its many grotesque elements — men dancing in black tail-coats and billycock hats are not beautiful objects — and invested it with a quality that fascinated the on-lookers. The swaying and circling tide that flowed around the room, the pretty heads floating above the maze of turning bodies, the faces flushed with pleasure and exertion, the half-parted lips and sparkling eyes, the drooping and soaring of the continuous music — these all made for beauty; and the intent and absorbed air of the dancers added a touch of something like solemnity. While the music lasted, it was as though a charm hung over the room that set heads nodding and feet twinkling to the happy fleeting measure; as though a magic invisible piper were throwing a spell over the great miscellaneous throng and binding their feet to his dropping notes. And when the music stopped the spell snapped, the charm broke, and the rhythmic mass became a jostling crowd again, laughing, chattering, quarrelling,

shouting, bantering, pushing toward the tables or making for the cool breeze on the terraces.

The party from the Rue Blanche had not danced. The girls had been quite happy in exhibiting themselves to their acquaintance in the company of two undeniable gentlemen, while Richard and Lauder were absorbed in the unique charm of the spectacle, at which they could have remained gazing for hours. But at the end of a dance they too went out-of-doors into a cooler atmosphere, and they sat down on a bench overlooking the ramparts of the sham mill. Paris lay spread out below them like a bird's-eye map, its roofs shining in the afternoon sun, its towers and spires dotted about the great area of human habitation; and far to the south the Seine shone and twisted through it, like a silver snake.

Richard talked to Marthe, for whom he was beginning to have a feeling of affection and comradeship that he was not unwilling to mistake for something else; but he was by nature an epicure — a Puritan epicure — and he wished to be deliberate. He had but one article of morality in such a matter — that realization should be a tribute paid to affection, and never a false prophet of it; he was, moreover, secretly a little ashamed of abandoning the fine philosophic enjoyment of the situation, which he shared with Lauder, for a more commonplace pleasure. In all these ways he was younger than his years. Lauder, on his part,

was entirely happy in a serious impersonal conversation with Gabie as to her occupations and manner of life. She was an inconspicuous dancer at the Folies Bergères, where she earned thirty francs a week; she added to this meagre income as opportunity served, but she did not profess to like her supplementary profession. Domesticity, Lauder could see, was the ideal of her life. Self-respecting and capable as she was, she took a philosophic view of the situation. "I do not like it," she said with a smile, "but neither do I like starving; it is hard enough nowadays for a girl who respects herself to earn a living, and one must not complain." Her satellite affection for Marthe, whom she regarded as a gay and beautiful creature for whom the highest gifts of Fortune were hardly good enough, was charming in its singleness and simplicity. "Ah, but she has a good heart," she said; "we are the greatest friends." And indeed Marthe was no less devoted; she looked around often to see that Gabie was being entertained, and evidently wished for nothing that could not be shared with her; in a word, it was as pretty a picture of mutual kindness and comradeship as you could wish to see.

"Marthe is charming," said Lauder, as the two men walked away after taking leave of the girls at their door, "but my heart aches for that poor brave child Gabie. Not a ruffle on her counte-

nance, you notice — nothing but smiles and a brave face; but I have reason to believe that she has sometimes not enough to eat. Thank God she has a friend!”

They had parted in the greatest friendliness and affection. Marthe had taken them to her heart merely as comrades, and projected all sorts of innocent excursions. “The worst of it is,” said Lauder, “we can’t waste their time.”

“That’s rather a ghastly thought,” said Richard; “you mean they can’t afford innocent friendship?”

“Innocent be hanged: they can’t afford to spend their time with people who don’t pay for it. You saw how they treated us: it would have been a serious offence if we had proposed presents in any shape or form.”

“That’s what comes of your philosophic attitude, Lauder; I don’t think it’s quite fair.”

“It’s all right if we don’t overdo it. But I think I heard you making an appointment for Tuesday?” Richard grew red. “Well, it’s your own lookout, but I think it’s always a mistake to push these things too far. You’ve skimmed the cream, as far as Marthe is concerned; you’ll never be so happy with her as you were pottering about the streets this afternoon. Why not leave it at that?”

“Oh, I’ve no patience with your damned cold-blooded cynicism! I don’t think it’s quite whole-

some. If Marthe is worth knowing at all (and personally I think she is), she's worth knowing well, and treated as a human being, and not as a specimen. I suppose you'll lay her out in your mental museum of *demi-mondaines*, label her 'Marthe, Montmartroise: Summer, 1902,' and forget all about her?"

"On the contrary, I shall be able to tell you all about her when you say a month hence: 'Marthe? Let me see, who was Marthe?' But don't let me interfere with your romance; Heaven forbid! I only envy you your thoroughness."

"The worst of the philosophic mind is that it sometimes forgets to be human," said Richard, as they were crossing the Boulevard des Italiens.

But it was Lauder who, when he got back to his room in the hotel, slipped two hundred-franc notes into an envelope, and addressed them to Gabie, at the little flat in the Rue Blanche. And all he wrote within the envelope was: "*À ma brave petite amie.*"

III

RICHARD spent the next day immersed in professional affairs at the offices of the engineers who were constructing the Snail lighting apparatus; Lauder was revisiting some studio haunts in the neighborhood of St. Germain des Près; and the two men did not meet until evening, when they sallied forth together in search of dinner.

"Now, where shall we go?" asked Lauder. "Café de Paris, Durand's, Paillard's? All excellent and gay."

"Let's go to a quiet place," said Richard, on whom the day's occupation had had its effect; "I'm a little bit tired of the gilded world. Let's go where we won't see any cocottes."

"Let me see, then." Lauder stood meditating. "Voisin's — no, we'll go to Noel Peters, and dine in peace and quietness."

They walked up the Boulevard des Italiens, then beginning to stir with the evening traffic of diners and pleasure-seekers, and were soon discussing an excellent dinner — light, brief, but full of distinction and character — such as Lauder knew well

how to order. The service, deft and sober, melted one course into another imperceptibly; the Saint-Marceaux, dry, crisp, and of a famous year, tingled pleasantly on the palate; the Sauce Bercy was memorable; and by the time the two friends had lit their long thin cigars, and had taken their first sip of a fragrant old brandy, the mellowing influences of good wine and good cooking, of the evening hour, of distant footfalls and voices in the street, of the flowers and lights within, and of that sober and sacramental sense which friendship takes on in these golden and congenial moments, had wiped softly away from the tablets of Richard's mind all professional interests, and had once more warmed him into the appetite for more human studies.

Toward ten o'clock they strolled out into the cool streets, and, without discussion or word spoken, turned their steps northward. They were both in a mellow, meditative, and philosophic mood, a little fastidious of the world, and inclined to be revolted by too close contact with it. Philosophy such as theirs, however, mellow gale though it be, must have something to blow against if it is to be savored; and they turned into the Boite à Fursy, that strange little theatre in the Rue Pigalle, whose walls once sheltered the famous Chat Noir.

The stuffy little room was crowded, the uncomfortable benches thronged with a mixed crowd that

listened with rapt attention to the impassive utterances of an elderly man with a pale, dyspeptic face, who, without voice, eloquence, gesture, or facial intelligence, was singing a comic song. He stood alone on the little stage, accompanied by an invisible pianist; and his melancholy, impassive visage added to the delight of the audience in the really funny conceits of his song. *Je ne sais pas, je ne sais pas*, went the eternal jog-trot of the refrain; but the art of the invisible pianist embroidered the dreary plain-song with harmonic graces that fell startlingly on Richard's ear. He was a musician by nature, and something of a pianist; he would walk ten miles any day to hear Siloti or Busoni; but this improvised accompaniment to a music-hall song had a quality of genius that was entirely new to him. He forgot the singer, the words; he heard only that wonderful rippling rush of harmonies, the pearly counterpoints strung around the ignoble air, the pauses, hesitations, shakes, imitations, cadences with which the invisible accompanist made tolerable to himself his mean task. What fallen genius, Richard wondered, was there immured, like a captive bird in a cage, and singing to himself in his captivity? And yet he remembered to have heard tales of men who had so fallen in love with the life of this strange quarter that they had gladly forsaken the world, buried themselves in Montmartre, and, like monks that take a vow, dedicated

their lives to the service of its intimate pleasures; and he wondered if the great harmonist, the splendid dreamy *improvisateur* behind the curtain were indeed some such happy, wine-sodden vestige of a man.

When the pale-faced singer had finished Fursy himself appeared (looking very like the German emperor in his turned-up moustache), and enchanted the audience with a string of his political songs. Through them all the accompanist kept up his ripple of inexhaustible melodic invention, modulating between the songs like a cathedral organist, gracing them with a wealth of ornament, of shy, fugitive counter-themes and graces, such as made a poem in tone of the meanest of them. Then the curtain descended and every one adjourned for beer and cigarettes to an adjoining grotto—a sordid place only redeemed by the gracious presence of Fursy, who shone in it like a good deed in a naughty world, and distributed smiles and recognitions like a prince.

“Let’s get out of this monkey-house atmosphere,” said Lauder, who had been less amused than Richard by the political songs. They walked slowly up to the Place Pigalle, passing on the way an open, lighted doorway leading to some basement premises, and surmounted by an occulting sign which displayed, in alternate red and white lights, the words “Nox Bar.”

“What’s a Nox Bar?” asked Richard.

"I haven't an idea; you'd better go and see."

There was a porter standing at the door, although no one was coming out or in; and the empty, luminous oblong of the doorway had a sinister appearance. They passed the porter, who smiled curiously, and (they thought) a little derisively, and went down a very steep, narrow, and somewhat ill-smelling staircase. Richard's nostrils took alarm. "I don't like this—hullo! another turning," as the steep, winding stairway gave place to a long narrow passage turning sharply to the right. Richard sniffed.

"This doesn't amuse me, Lauder; the atmosphere takes me by the throat. Now is our time. Shall we turn this corner, eat of the tree of knowledge, and discover the sinister mystery of the Nox Bar; or shall we turn tail, and breathe the air of heaven again unburdened by its secrets?"

"I've a very shrewd idea now what its secret is—and it's pretty ordinary and sordid. Let us return in innocence." And they turned tail and ascended the stairs again, passing the porter (who now openly laughed) and emerging into the cool dark air of the street, where Richard breathed deeply.

"Nothing would induce me," he said, looking at the blank lighted doorway, "to reënter that place; it is delightful to have a mystery unexplored. But," he continued, standing in the

middle of the street and looking up at the sign, "I like their group-flashing light; I must include it in the book of sailing directions for Paris which I am compiling. 'Mariners proceeding on a north-going tide through the Rue Pigalle should, especially if a sheet in the wind's eye, keep the Nox Bar light well on the starboard hand to clear the Taberin eddies and the Fursy shoals. The Nox Bar two points on the starboard bow leads clear of all dangers into the Place Pigalle, where there is abundance of water and good anchorage at the Rat Mort. The red sector of the Nox Bar light shows foul ground to the northward, and the narrow channel of the Rue Houdon should on no account be attempted at night without a pilot. Vessels going southward, even if deeply laden, may stand in to the Nox Bar light, as the ebb-tide will carry them clear of all dangers. It is high-water at the Rue Pigalle, full and change, at three hours forty minutes, after which the ebb sets southward into Paris.' How's that?"

"Excellent," laughed Lauder. "I think your nautical survey of Paris would be welcomed by many a jaded reveller, if you could guide him by lights. You'd better send in at once a 'Proposal for the Erection of Lighthouses on the Principal Dangers of Paris.' It would, at any rate, have a success as a moral tract. Where are we going now? It's too early for the Rat Mort."

"Let us look in at the Tabarin," said Richard. "We shall probably see Marthe there, and Gabie, perhaps; and I see there's a Gala Ball on."

The great hall had to-night an appearance quite unlike the Bohemian gaiety which it wore on their former visit. It was now packed with a crowd of dancers in fancy dress, while the gallery was thronged with people sitting at tables, or throwing streamers of colored paper down into the arena. From every side a network of these flimsy ribbons floated down, were entangled in the dancers, broke, and added to the sea of paper already on the floor, a sea which steadily rose about the feet of the dancers in spite of the labors of the attendants with brushes. Nearly all the men were smoking; and, if it had been a church bazar instead of the Bal Tabarin, the very thought of the lighted match dropped on that acre of paper and chiffon would in itself have been enough to create a panic. But in this light-hearted, light-headed, absorbed company there were no fears and no precautions; and God or the devil (which you will) looked after his own.

The two men wormed and elbowed their way through the crowd toward a corner of the bar where there was a little free space. In the centre of the hall dancing was impossible, so tightly packed was the throng, and the band fiddled and drummed in vain. The room was merely a shell

packed like a shrapnel with human fragments, and in the heat and glare, and stifling, oppressive atmosphere, it seemed amazing that the very walls were not rent asunder and the roof lifted off by the expansive forces of the crowd.

"I begin to be a little disgusted," said Lauder; and indeed to a detached observer the hectic, artificial gaiety of the place could hardly fail to be repellent. The silliness of the paper streamers, and the yells of those who threw them, had a kind of lunatic horror for a mind not loosened into sympathy; and the cheap and tawdry costumes of girls hired by the place to behave with as much madness and shamelessness as the crowd might desire looked only dreary and sordid amid the dust and heat and odors of the place. Richard turned wearily away from the crowd, and caught sight of two very pretty, refined-looking girls sitting together before the bar. It was part of his attraction that he could always interest himself immediately and whole-heartedly in whatever pleased him; and as he had an insatiable curiosity for the human side of this world in which he found himself, he was no sooner pleased by the sight of these faces than he decided to explore what lay behind them. It is not the least charm of the world of pleasure that, although it has its etiquette, it has no merely vexatious restrictions; and in two minutes Richard was engaged in a polite conversation with these ladies, who were

good enough to refresh themselves with orangeade and cigarettes at his expense.

Charming as they were to look upon, however, their conversation was disappointing, or Richard was not fortunate in leading it into productive channels. He lacked, as he complained to Lauder, that particular kind of conversational effrontery, that exact shade of brusqueness, which is understood to be successful with barmaids; and the mortification of seeing his refined courtesies neglected in favor of some gross and hearty pleasantry was not unfamiliar to him. He made the mistake of treating all women alike, and had not learned that a barmaid is far from flattered at being treated like a countess. In this case, the conversation, polite and highly decorous as it was, flagged; the ladies appeared, in some mysterious way, to be on the defensive; and the one to whom Richard more particularly addressed himself scrutinized him from time to time with a puzzled air. She was a singularly beautiful girl, tall and slim and fair, with fine aristocratic features and cold gray eyes; she was of an English or Irish rather than a French type, although she spoke nothing but French, and that in the manner of the Belgians. Richard was beginning to look anxiously at the level of the orangeade in the glasses, and to seek for a graceful means of withdrawal, when he felt a warm little hand on his arm.

He turned around. "Ah, Marthe!" he said, delightedly, for he was honestly glad to see her again; "we thought we'd lost you." And, Lauder joining them, they fell into conversation about the ball, Richard now and then turning around and exchanging a remark with his fair friend. Marthe hung upon his arm, and looked up into his eyes, with a devotion pleasantly embarrassing. She seemed to Richard, indeed, to be making an undue demonstration of ownership; but it was far from being displeasing to him. Amid all the dust and noise and confusion of the great room she seemed to create a little corner of warmth and friendship, she was so familiar and pretty and domestic.

Presently Richard, turning to address the fair Belgian in some agreeable commonplace, found himself received with a cold stare. He thought she had not heard him, and repeated his remark; but the cold gray eyes, now lit with a rather wicked glitter, regarded him blankly. He was puzzled and embarrassed, and, after explaining to Lauder in English what had happened, turned again to the lady and asked her most politely if he had had the misfortune to offend her. He said it with his most ingratiating smile, and thinking she might have resented his conversation with Marthe, explained that the Montmartroise was an old acquaintance. The girl made an indignant and angry exclamation, said something

to her friend, moved away a little, and continued to regard Richard with anger. He shrugged his shoulders and turned to speak to Marthe; but what was his amazement to find her pretty face now transfigured with wrath, and her dark eyes directed flashingly on the Belgian.

"In the name of God," he said, "what is the matter? Are you all bewitched?"

"You were speaking to that woman there!" said Marthe, indignantly.

"But is it not permitted to offer a civility?" asked Richard, amazed. "Lauder," he continued in English, "come here and get me out of this; I have offended every one, and I'm as innocent as a baby."

Lauder began to laugh; and as he saw the look of rising hatred and anger on the faces of the two women, and the look of increasing alarm on Richard's countenance, he laughed the more.

"It's all very well to laugh," said Richard, "but I don't want to be involved in a French row;" and the travelling Briton suddenly looked forth from his face. He got up and moved a few yards away. Immediately Marthe followed him, stood beside him and took his arm, like a lioness defending her cub — or her prey; and immediately the fair Belgian followed them also, and resumed her watchful and belligerent attitude.

Lauder now, still laughing, began to talk to the fair Belgian's friend. "You and I," he said,

“are people of the world, and can conduct our affairs with propriety. What are these children quarrelling about?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “He ought not to have addressed that woman when he was with us.”

“But she is a *vieille camarade*,” said Lauder; “besides, it was only for the good motive. My friend is virtuous and inquisitive; he is also generous and of an amiable disposition; he did not wish to occupy this lady’s time, but merely to offer her a civility.”

The woman laughed. “They must settle it among themselves,” she said. “But I warn you, Claire has a temper of her own.”

Richard was now thoroughly alarmed and miserable. He sat between the two glowering women, neither of whom would speak to him, although Marthe had her arm through his in an attitude of affection which was, under the circumstances, ironical. If he offered a remark, neither deigned to notice it, but they fixed each other with their eyes across him in a highly alarming manner; while Lauder’s unrestrained laughter in the background seemed to him both foolish and dangerous. Presently he saw the fair Belgian make a movement with one of her hands, and perceived with dismay that she held in her clenched fist a pair of scissors. The movement was instantly answered by Marthe, whom he also saw to be clasping some

instrument. The perspiration broke out on his forehead, and signalling to Lauder, he acquainted him with this formidable development. He still laughed, much to Richard's anger.

"It's no use, my dear Richard, I can't help it; you look so funny and miserable sitting between these two spitfires. This is what comes of being virtuous. Dangerous? Of course it's dangerous, but we won't make it any better by looking frightened. I've said all I can to the other woman; but you've evidently offended one of the canons. Try to get Marthe away, and I will try to divert madame's attention."

It was not easy, for the two women stared at each other, motionless and with fixed eyes, like cats about to fight; but presently Lauder addressed the Belgian, and said he desired to offer an explanation. She moved off with him a little way; and immediately the unhappy Richard drew Marthe away into the crowd, where her deadly attitude relaxed, and she smiled upon him once more. "The knife was only for fun," she said, producing a small open penknife; but Richard persuaded her to confide it to his keeping, nor did he breathe freely until it was safe in his pocket. He took Marthe to the "Village Fair" in the basement, where they sat in a quiet corner, and he bought her flowers, and had her fortune told, and lavished boxes of sweetmeats upon her; and she nestled up beside him and became the familiar

delightful comrade of the former day. He wanted not to leave her; but she had an appointment which she was obliged to keep. Otherwise Richard's destiny might have been different; as it was, he saw her go with genuine disappointment, and could not even then help admiring the unrelenting worldly wisdom with which she went to keep an engagement distasteful to her.

He made an appointment with her and said good-by in the belief that they would meet soon; but as it fell out, he was destined not to see her again. Through the mazes of the ball she passed out of his life as lightly as she had entered it, like a leaf, blown by the wind through the open window, that circles around you for a moment and then floats out again. Yet she left a lasting impression on his mind, entirely sweet and unspoiled.

He met Lauder, who had also disentangled himself.

"Now for Heaven's sake let us get out of this," said Richard. "No more New Arabian Nights for me. The 'Adventure of the Fair Belgian' is quite enough. Besides, I'm sick of this sordid place — aren't you?"

"I'm quite ready to go," said Lauder, "and rather hungry after this excitement; let us go and have supper at the Rat Mort."

It was but a few steps up the street, and they

were soon sitting at a corner table of the restaurant on the first floor, dividing their attention between supper and the other occupants of the room, which was L-shaped, and had a small bar at the end of the arm nearest the door. The place was not crowded, but was gradually filling up with couples in evening dress — obviously not of the local world. Around one of the pillars near the door was grouped the red-coated band, playing from memory the inevitable music of popular dances.

“This is one of the most curious restaurants in the world,” said Lauder; “it is different things at different hours of the day and night. You can dine in this room, almost alone, and most excellently; you have the attentions of the chef and the chief *maitre d’hôtel* almost exclusively to yourself. Down-stairs, the world of Montmartre dines liberally but indifferently for 2 fr. 50; up-stairs, from eleven till two, the gay Parisienne and her cavalier drop in to supper; you see they are beginning to drop out now. After two, the Rat Mort becomes quite a different place. A certain few distinguished cocottes — distinguished in many different ways — and their friends come on here, and the restaurant resolves itself into an informal club. You’ll see presently. They are beginning to arrive from Maxim’s now.”

A change was gradually taking place at the tables. The nondescript and miscellaneous were

melting away, and being replaced by guests more expensively dressed, more distinguished, better-looking. The shy couples who had been sitting looking into one another's eyes, or holding one another's hands under the tables, gave place to gay and pretty women, who came in with an air of proprietorship, sent their wraps away to the cloak-room, and settled down in all the glory of diamonds and charming costumes, as though they did not intend to move for some hours. These girls were attended by men of the cosmopolitan stamp that Richard had noticed at Maxim's—good-looking, rich, and well-groomed, but nearly all weary and dissipated. With this hour—the hour that in the world of nature under the calm skies is heralded by such sweet and tender changes and stirrings—a change also came upon this scene of subverted life and pleasure. The golden tide of money, impalpable, invisible, swept into the room; in the very atmosphere, in the air Richard breathed, he was aware of a change, knew that he drew a deeper inspiration of this sparkling and dangerous element; and as the tide rose higher it loosened a little the conventions of the place, and raised to a higher level the limits, never very severe, of restraint and formality. And yet a kind of false decorum, a travesty of the social rule, reigned over this company of social outlaws; hosts and guests, though essentially buyers and sellers, fell into the usages of

hospitality, and the one subject tabooed in conversation was the origin and purpose of their presence there.

The dark-eyed, smiling musicians played their waltzes and mazurkas, the waiters hurried hither and thither, the champagne corks flew, the flowers and jewels shone in the soft red light, and lovely eyes sparkled in fair, tired faces; and as the cigarette smoke began to coil into the air the pitch of conversation rose a little. Greetings and badinage were shouted across the room; now a girl would get up and cross to another table, and sit down for a moment on some one's knee; now some woman who had been sitting quietly and decorously with her friend would get up in all her formal paraphernalia of *grande toilette*, picture hat, gloves, and jingling handful of gold purses and chains and toys, and, lifting high her costly skirts, float and pirouette for a minute or two down the centre of the room. A girl whom Lauder had pointed out to Richard at Maxim's as the principal model of a famous dead artist sat at a table between two men, an arm around the neck of each. She was altogether devoid of formal beauty, for her features (with the exception of her lovely eyes) were insignificant and irregular; but she was exquisitely made, and the pose of her small head, and the alluring inclination with which it floated above her shoulders,

gave her a charm and distinction peculiar to herself.

Suddenly she leaned over one of the men beside her, and, with a languorous and abandoned gesture, laid her lips on his. In a moment the other man had leaped up, overturned the table, which, with its load of glass, china, plate, food, and wine, went crashing to the floor, and stood over her in an ugly, threatening attitude, trembling and shaking with passion and livid with rage. For a second the movement of the room crystallized into rest; for a second Richard saw it, paralyzed, petrified, as though some angel of destruction had turned all those painted figures into stone. The glasses hung midway between table and lips, the knives and forks rested in the air, the bows of the fiddlers lay motionless on the strings in the middle of a bar, the feet of the dancers hung in the air; for a second the whole room, tables, guests, waiters, bandsmen, were like the dead effigies in an exhibition. As quick as thought the girl went up to the man where he stood shaking with passion, put her hands on his shoulders, and, with exactly the same languorous grace, closed her heavy-lidded eyes, and laid her lips on his. The spell was broken, and his face relaxed into foolish surrender. Instantly sound and movement broke forth again in the room, the band resumed its playing in the midst of the interrupted bar, the clatter of knives and forks, of talk and laugh-

ter, was resumed; and the smiling and unshocked waiters removed the débris. The incident had happened and passed in the space of a few seconds; it was absolutely disregarded by the company; and Richard realized, with something like terror, the brutality and shocking suddenness of the affair, and the ignoble part played by the man who had caused it.

"Things are waking up," said Lauder, cheerfully; "but that is not a usual incident here. The man is evidently not an *habitué*."

Just at that moment Richard caught sight of a daintily clad figure on the other side of the room, and of a face, under a broad hat of roses and lace, that seemed familiar. She was at a table facing him, on the other side of the room, and she was jumping up and down in her seat and clapping her hands like a child at a feast. As he looked at her she met his eye and recognized him; and in another minute she had run across the room and given a hand each to Richard and Lauder.

"Oh, here you are! I been looking for you — *oh*, so long! We have had, *oh*, such a good time! My dear, I give you my vord, I never laugh so much in all my life! But look here, don't sit over here — come over to my table — do come."

"But look here, Toni," said Lauder, "you have a man with you; we can't come to your table."

“Oh, don't be silly, my dear — he's nobody! He was sitting there when I come in, and he want me to have supper with him, but really I am quite alone. Listen, I tell you somesing,” and her eyes sparkled as she leaned over them: “He say to me, ‘My dear, I love you very much; if you will come and see me I give you fife, *ten* pounds.’ I look very grave and I say: ‘Sank you veree much,’ I say, ‘but I never see so much monies at vonce in *all* my life; it is too much for me, my dear. I could not think of taking it.’ But how I laugh! Poor boy, when I tell him I refuse tree thousand francs only last night, he nearly go off in fits. But come along, and we will sit and amuse ourselves.”

“Let us go,” said Richard; and they transferred themselves to the other side of the room, near the band, where the headquarters of gaiety were situated. Toni's companion, a shy, dull-looking Scotsman, moved off of his own accord, with a gay greeting from her, and the bill for her supper and his own. The meal was only half-finished; but it was instantly cleared away, and Toni proceeded to order another.

“*Écrevisses* — Oh, my dear, I love *écrevisses*,” she exclaimed, like a greedy child. “And then a *Poulet Cocotte Mascotte* — oh, so good! And look here, my dear,” she turned to Lauder, “don't let us drink this stuff — I do not like it,” pointing to the *Tisane* provided by the thrifty Scot

which had just been opened; "let us have some Katinka, 1884 — oh, *lovely*, I give you my vord!"

They were soon eating again, or pretending to, Toni keeping up a rattling conversation with Lauder as to her recent doings. Richard sat opposite listening to every word. Her English, in spite of its German-Polish disguise, was pretty and dainty, and she made it infinitely expressive. Her face had the quality of childish clarity and life that he had noticed at first: it was childishly eager, or childishly grave; only the eyes, as before, contradicted its innocence with their deep golden fire, and the little red mouth, alluring and repelling in its perversity, reminded him of a childish vampire — childishly greedy, childishly cruel. She was beautifully and expensively dressed, though obviously without anxiety; she possessed a confidence and certainty in her charm that dared to be careless in details; her jewelry was negligently worn, the safety of her dress disregarded in any moment of excitement. She had not that permanent preoccupation about her clothes and appearance that oppresses so many women of her class; herself and her enjoyment of the moment always came first, her clothes second. Even her tawny, red-gold hair was not, like the head-dress of the Frenchwomen around her, elaborately curled and coiffured; it was coiled upon her forehead, and taken up from her little white neck, with an appearance of carelessness that was very charming.

She was entirely without patience; if she did not hear what was said to her, she rattled out "What? what? what?" and was off to some other subject before Lauder had time to reply; she spoke with intelligence, but listened, apparently, with none; and she wrinkled her forehead and moved her head with quick kittenish movements that suggested a tireless and alert vitality. Richard felt the atmosphere around her to be more bracing and vital than elsewhere; he listened to every word she said, watched every quick movement of her head, with an absorbed interest and fascination. She was not fidgety; she had her moments of repose, when the slumbering light in her eyes would leap into a flame that seemed to resolve and decompose the very elements of what she was looking at; and it was this rapid alternation of profound gravity and rippling liveliness that gave to her beauty so unique an attraction. She was not, like most of the women there, seductive in a merely animal or fleshly way; on the contrary, in that sexual environment she appeared almost sexless; some nobler mystery, some subtle emanation of the soul, informed her with its alluring spirit. Richard was completely charmed and fascinated by her. She hardly seemed to notice him, although she was of course perfectly aware of his interest in her; and it was not until she was smoking a cigarette and sipping a glass of Grand Marnier that she turned to him again.

“You like this place better than Maxim’s? Yes? Oh, Maxim’s, my dear, it is all right, of course; you see every one there, but it is mixed, my dear, very mixed — too many *sales femmes* there. Here you may do as you like, and there are only friends.” She looked at him with a friendly glance that was half for his eyes, and half for his shirt-studs and the cut of his clothes — the deadly, perceptive, unconsciously appraising glance of the born cocotte.

“You like my dress, what?” she rattled on, inconsequently; “oh, it is nothing, nothing, my dear. Paquin can’t make this kind of dress — it is too simple for him. You should see another — the same color — that Doucet make me last year — oh, a *dream*, I tell you, my dear, beautiful! Vy you not drinking? What? Drink some champagne, my dear, don’t be silly. Your friend he not drink, either? Oh, go on! Tell me, where you staying? Ritz — Elysée Palace — what? Oh, I tell you somesings funny — *oh*, so funny! I never laugh so much in all my life! An old man I see at Folies Bergères last night — oh, a very chic old man, I give you my vord, but ugly, *dreadful*, my dear; he say to me, ‘Toni,’ he say, ‘I like to call on you; where you staying?’ I say, ‘Oh, I am living very quietly, I am not going out.’ He say, ‘I like to send you some flowers.’ I say, ‘Sank you very much,’ I say. ‘Send them to Ritz’s, to Madame Toni.’ Oh, how I laugh, my

dear! Of course, I am not staying at Ritz at all! I tell you, I never laugh so much in *all* my life!" And she rattled on without waiting for any comment or interrogation, nodding her pretty, brilliant little head energetically until the flowers in her hat shook again.

A Spanish dancer, engaged by the proprietor to amuse his guests, now tripped out to the clatter of castanets and began to dance. She was a short, dark creature, with a handsome face, raven hair, and a beautiful costume of shot colors. Richard glanced at her, and then became absorbed in Toni's sudden regard of her. It was not merely that her attention was caught; she was watching her with the courtesan's respect and curiosity for a woman who can do something which she herself cannot do. Her conversation stopped, the cigarette smoked unheeded in her fingers; two faint vertical lines appeared in her forehead, and she followed every antic of the brave, gay dance with intent eyes, head and eyes moving to follow the dancer's movement as a kitten follows the flight of a bird. When the dance was over she clapped her hands. "Very good, my dear," she said to Lauder, and, calling the dancer to the table, with the vicarious generosity of her kind, made Lauder give her a louis.

Presently a charming-looking girl, conspicuous for her English look of health and honesty, and

for her admirable (and very un-English) toilet, came up and sat down at the table with them.

"Let me come and sit here, Toni," she said with a frown; "I want to get away from that man. Vulgar beast!" she muttered, tapping the ground with her foot.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Lauder, offering her a cigarette. "He looks all right."

"Cheek!" she said, indignantly. "He wanted to come home with me! I don't know what some of these people are made of. I told him I wouldn't let him come home with me for a thousand pounds." And she went on speaking with genuine indignation to Lauder on the subject of people's rudeness.

Richard began to be a little puzzled. He had always dimly pictured cocottes as a species of harpy, continually preying upon men; here were two, perhaps the prettiest women in the room, whose one preoccupation seemed to be to get rid of people, and to be allowed to enjoy life in their own way. With the quickness of their kind, the two women had recognized that Lauder and Richard were for the moment mere spectators in the great game; and they therefore drew to them with flattering friendliness. But why? What did they want, if not money? Richard could not quite make it out; but at this moment his attention was diverted by peals of laughter from some adjoining table. A short, stoutish Englishwoman

of about five and thirty, carefully dressed in a tight-fitting white silk frock and a clever hat, had come out into the cleared space, and was affecting to dance, with movements purposely uncouth and grotesque. She was excited by wine, and pretended to be more excited than she was; and she flung herself about with all the cock-sure abandonment of an old music-hall favorite. In spite of the inevitable and even (to a sober mind) painful disadvantage of her condition, there was something hearty, humorous, and not unwholesome in her appearance that disarmed offence. Her bold black eyes roved around the room with a Rabelaisian fearlessness; she had the confidence of one who knows human nature in and out, and is prepared to deal with any emergency which her conduct may create; and she walked up confidently to a pretty French girl, and, taking up a liqueur-glass out of which she was about to drink, emptied it at a draught.

"Don't mention it," she said in a somewhat husky voice. "My fault entirely. I was so thirsty I couldn't wait. Keska-say-ka-sah? Oh, I'm a divvle at Frinch. Here waiter, garson, ici, comprenney? Fill madame's glass, and mind you don't spill any. Keska-say-ka-sah?" And she went on to another table, where she fixed an elderly American, who was looking on at her vagaries with rather a depressed countenance, with a stony stare.

“What’s your trouble?” she asked, seriously. “You ought to take something for it, you know. I wouldn’t let it run on — it might injure you.” And she continued to bombard him with absurd remarks until he began to laugh in spite of himself.

“There now, you’ll feel better now. Never hold it back. You’ve got to get better before you feel worse — no, I mean — I don’t know what I mean! — *keska-say-ka-sah?*” She began to dance in an ungainly fashion about the tables, going from one to another, picking out some guest and apostrophizing him, but contriving not to offend anybody seriously, and, in her way, to amuse every one. There was such a complete good nature, such an abandonment to playing the fool and looking ridiculous for the benefit of the majority, that it was difficult not to respond, and impossible to be offended.

Presently she came to the table where Lauder and Richard were sitting. Toni, who evidently knew her, addressed her by the name of Matilda, and told her to sit down; and she immediately fastened on Lauder.

“Hullo, I’ve seen that boy before,” she said. “I know; at the old Alsatians, in London.” And she shook hands with him effusively. “Oh, I never forget a face. That must be ten years ago at least — *keska-say-ka-sah?*” Richard was rather alarmed lest she should direct her attention to

him, and so make him unpleasantly conspicuous; but she talked to Lauder in a vein of reminiscence, and left Richard free to pursue a fragmentary but somewhat one-sided conversation with Toni, whose attention and glances wandered all around the room. The English girl Elsa sat silent, or only spoke rarely to Lauder and Matilda, the irrepressible, in quiet and conventional tones.

The hours passed on imperceptibly in that gay, lighted company, winged by music and laughter and fugitive humors that would have no meaning or color outside its hothouse atmosphere. The little English-speaking group drew together, and were pleased with each other; and though Richard could never tell afterward how the hours passed, he remembered that he must have been absorbed indeed not to notice their passage. Toni occupied his attention wholly, and as much of Lauder's as could be spared from the humors of Matilda and polite conversation with Elsa. No one was sleepy; the fun kept up noisily around them, the dancing went on, like the music, untiringly; and it was with a shock of surprise that Richard suddenly saw through a window from which the curtain had been withdrawn the ghostly blue of daylight slanting in upon the yellow glare. Long afterward, indeed, he remembered that moment, and the scene in which it found him: the lights, the flowers, the pretty, unsubstantial dresses, the pale charming faces, the jewels; and,

most striking of all, the picture of the Spanish dancer, with her beautiful tired face, and her dress of blended colors, — blue, gold, orange, red, purple, — illuminated by the daylight window, and, although surrounded still by the red glow of electric lamps, touched by the cold finger of dawn.

“Here, boys,” said Matilda, seriously, to Richard and Lauder, “what’s the matter with coming home to our place, and having a cigarette and talking things over? It’s only half-past four.”

“Let’s move, at any rate,” said Lauder; and calling for the bills, which mounted in the aggregate to a handsome figure, he paid them and followed the little group out of the room. It was daylight, cool and fresh and pure, in the Place Pigalle; and while the chasseur was calling a carriage they stood on the pavement in their gay evening dresses in the silent morning, like creatures derelict, who had drifted into a new day. Elsa and Lauder went off first in an open carriage, while the other three squeezed into a coupé, and drove down into Paris, still talking volubly and laughing. They had not been driving long before a diversion was proposed by Toni, whom nothing that was new, and that was not the thing of the moment, seemed able to tire.

“Oh, don’t let us go home yet,” she pleaded. “We go to the Café Américain — such fun. *Do* come, there’s a good boy;” and she turned to Richard, who felt strangely pleased and flattered

by the direct appeal to him. Matilda, however, was adamant for once; and though Richard was in the mood to follow willingly wherever Toni might lead, he added his dissuasions on the ground of not splitting up the party. He was amazed to notice how quickly Toni acquiesced; she seemed to have forgotten her proposal as soon as it was made. She chattered merrily until the carriage drew up at a hotel in the Rue de Calais.

Richard seemed to himself to have been suddenly caught in a tide which swept him along irrespective of his own wish or effort. The easy friendliness of Matilda, who treated him as an "old pal," and his subtle appropriation by the wayward and beautiful Toni, made him accept everything that happened as a matter of course — even the fact that he was walking up the stairs of a Paris hotel at five o'clock in the morning with two ladies whose acquaintance he had made since midnight. The hotel was a shy, quiet place; one of those accommodating French hostelries in which surprise is an unknown emotion, and where the habit of asking no questions is practised as a high art. They stole quietly up-stairs to the first floor, and entered the room to the left. The curtains were closely drawn so as to exclude the daylight, and the electric lights were turned on; Lauder was sitting in his overcoat in an armchair smoking a cigarette, and Elsa was sitting on a table, also smoking, and talking gaily to him.

"Here, let's sit down," said Matilda; "make yourselves at home, boys, and have a drink. No? Well, you're two of the rummiest boys I ever struck. No drink, no anything; I don't know what you left home for. Now, you with the keska-say-ka-sah face" — to Richard — "give me cigarette, and cheer up. This is what I call friendly and pleasant."

The talk became general and somehow amusing. No one seemed tired or sleepy; there was nothing in the conversation either improper or interesting; it was essentially empty; but a healthy human curiosity in and attraction to each other provided the members of the party with interest enough. It was a strange little group: Matilda, frankly vulgar, on the spree, and yet with a wholesome simplicity of mind and character; Elsa, with the manners of a gentlewoman, brilliant and charming, and with all kinds of little unspoiled feminine graces and unselfishness; Toni, young, cosmopolitan, spoiled child, with her wayward beauty, vivacity, intelligence; Lauder blandly interested in every one, and quite sufficiently amused; Richard curious, occupied with the novelty of his situation, profoundly interested in Toni.

As they talked she suddenly came and sat down on his knee, for there was a scarcity of chairs. At her touch his blood leaped with a thrill that astonished his mind no less than his body; he realized suddenly how he had been longing to

touch her. There was no special meaning in her coming, except that she wanted somewhere to sit; she rested on his knee as lightly as a bird, and talked animatedly in German to Matilda, about some refractory maid; but her nearness to him was exquisite, and made him happy in a breathless and almost timid way. He put his arm around her, very gently and lightly, as though he feared to frighten her away; he felt the warmth of her limbs through the filmy dress she wore, and trembled at the sensation. She took no notice of him whatever — used him simply as a chair; yet he felt unreasonably happy and dignified by her presence.

They spoke in low tones, out of regard for the slumbering inhabitants of the hotel. The conversation was carried on chiefly by Lauder and Toni, who discussed the whereabouts of acquaintances in the shifting world of pleasure; but Richard hardly heard the conversation. He was conscious only of Toni, listened only to her; and he could have wished the conversation to last for hours if only she would stay where she was, seemingly unconscious of his shy caresses. It was Matilda who put an end to it by getting up and yawning, and announcing her intention of going to bed, which she proceeded immediately to do. The others went out laughing on to the landing.

While Lauder was saying good night to Elsa on the stairs, Richard followed Toni into the room

on the other side of the first floor. They passed through a small bedroom, in which Toni's German servant — half-nurse, half-maid — was sleeping, and into a larger room, much more elegant in its appointments than Matilda's. It had plenty of window space, there was no luggage in it, and it was full of costly and pretty toys and trifles of toilet gear. Toni yawned and took off her hat, revealing a tumbled crown of tawny hair; then she went to a side-table and took from a little white bottle a couple of tabloids, which she swallowed with a glass of water. Richard picked up the bottle, which was labelled "sulphonal." "To make me sleep, my dear," she explained. She treated his presence with complete unconsciousness, as though he had been her maid or a child.

Suddenly he caught her in his arms, and kissed her, holding his face a long while close to hers.

"Naughty boy, you are!" she said, releasing herself and looking at him with a scrutinizing smile. "But I like you — oh, I like you very much, or else you wouldn't be here, my dear." Her voice was stifled as he caught her again in his strong arms, and pressed her lithe young body close to his own, kissing her again and again on the lips.

She drew away from him, and looked at him again with that grave, intent scrutiny, as of a child who has discovered a new animal in a garden, and waits to see what it will do.

"Tell me," she said. "Vy you like me so much?"

He was trembling, and his voice was husky. "I think I love you," he whispered.

"Oh, don't be silly," she said, laughing. "If you ever love any one, my dear, you know it comes not so easy as that. But I like you — you are a nice boy."

"O Toni!" he whispered, and strained her in his arms again.

She yawned. "Not to-night, my dear; some other time. I see you in the Rat Mort, and knew you wanted me — *oh*, so badly. But not now, my dear. Listen; I tell you somesing. Some day you and I shall spend a night together, and we shall be — *oh*, so happy! Good night, my dear. Don't make a noise."

He thrilled at her words, held her close to him again while she put up her face for his kisses, and went out, hardly seeing where he went. Lauder was waiting for him, and together they walked out into the early morning sunshine. Richard felt suddenly tired; his mind was filled with whirling thoughts.

IV

TH**ERE** was a cool freshness in the air as they walked through the sunny morning streets, clean and pure from the floods of water that had been poured on them in the early hours.

“I have an idea, Richard,” said Lauder, stopping in his walk as they neared the hotel. “It’s after six o’clock. What do you say to having a bath, changing, and going out into the country — Fontainebleau, I suggest — instead of going to bed?”

“It’s an idea, certainly. I feel as if I wanted my head cleared after all these hours in restaurants. But — how long should we be away? Frankly, Lauder, I want to see some more of our friends.”

“There’s no reason why we shouldn’t; we need only stay away for twenty-four hours. Why,” Lauder added with a grim smile, “there’s no reason why you shouldn’t invite them out to Fontainebleau!”

“They wouldn’t come,” said Richard; “besides — well, let us have some fresh air anyway. Why

shouldn't we revisit your old haunts, and go to Barbizon?"

"A good idea. If we hurry we can catch the first train."

They went back to their hotel; bathed, packed, and caught the train with a minute to spare. Soon they were flying through the suburbs of Paris, with their toylike houses and trim little market-gardens. Lauder was busy with a minute system of accounts which, as he had constituted himself paymaster for both, he felt bound to keep; Richard looked out at the flying landscape, and thought with some bewilderment of the strange hours through which he had passed. He was a little jaded, naturally; but in his heart there was a kind of unreasonable joy, as of one who has found a perishable treasure. The touch of Toni's lips was on his yet, unfaded; he wanted to talk about her to Lauder, but a certain shyness and shame withheld him. He wanted still more to realize within himself what exactly his sudden interest in her might mean. He was too frank and too fastidious not to realize that there may be a fascination of the flesh that is entirely without relation to the mind or the soul; it was an idea from which he had always somehow recoiled; yet here was a woman of whose mind or soul all he definitely knew was that she had reconciled herself to the trade of her body, and yet who woke in him a longing, a sympathy, such as no other

woman had ever inspired. What did it mean? Was it the flesh alone that thus drew him like a magnet? Or was it the spirit that slumbered in those mysterious eyes of hers, that called to his as deep calls unto deep? He was by nature averse from sentimental self-delusion; he loved to call things by their true names, and to douche himself with the cold aspersion of facts; he tried to say to himself: "You may give the thing a finer name, but your sensuality has merely been awakened by a woman whose business and trade it is to make such awakenings; desire her if you will, but do not sentimentalize about her, or deceive yourself that ideal love, that rare flower that blooms in the soil of physical passion, has anything to do with it." Yet his reason and his heart, speaking in a rare unison, gave the lie to this simple, trivial explanation. The love of the flesh — yes; he recognized that he was involved in the love of the flesh, set free from conventional and moral preoccupations; he saw, as in a vision, the brief beauty and glory that might be possible for such love, and saw also, but more dimly, its inevitable limitations. Love! He recognized, almost with amusement, that he was reckoning at last with that ancient bogey of the sentimentalists, as he had often thought it; and it had come to him at last in a pure, crude form. He looked out of the window at the fleeting landscape, but saw nothing of it; he saw Toni's face, now amid the

lights and flowers of the Rat Mort; now averted and indifferent to him, in the hotel in the Rue de Calais while she sat on his knee; now with that sudden and curious scrutiny of her grave eyes after he had kissed her.

And yet again — perhaps it was nothing; only a fever of the blood, brought on by new scenes, late hours, tired nerves, the unwonted propinquity of a pretty woman; the fresh country air and rest would soothe and banish it. But did he wish it to be banished? No, oh, no! It was a new possession, a new current in his life, he prized it; and dangerous, difficult as he knew it to be, he knew also that he wished to prolong and extend it, to drink of the cup that chance had put near his lips — to drain it even to the dregs.

Lauder put away his pocketbook. “You owe me, so far, friend Richard, exactly thirty-two pounds ten shillings — and cheap at the money, I think. Heavens! how dissipated you look! Late hours don’t agree with you.”

“Lauder; tell me, what do you know about Toni?”

“Toni? Not much more than I told you — you ought to know more yourself by now. What I do know is that there is something wrong with her; either she is a fool, or she has had some trouble. If she knew her business, she could have the pick of Europe at her feet, with her beauty, temperament, and intelligence. But I know she

had a row with Prince Kralowski at Aix-les-Bains; and what she's doing with those other people (who aren't her class at all) I don't know. She ought to have money put away; I know Kralowski allowed her five thousand francs a week. She's a perverse little devil, but very, very intelligent, I should think."

Richard would have liked to talk more, but the train at that moment drew into Melun, where they got out, and took the light railway along the road through the forest to Barbizon. It was a lovely, cloudless day, with a breeze blowing fresh from the fragrant acreage of the forest; they felt a purity and nimbleness in the air that made a luxury of each inspiration. Jaded as they were, they enjoyed every minute of the journey along the outskirts of the forest, past sleepy Chailly, by the Angelus plain of Millet, and, turning a sudden corner, into the single long street of Barbizon.

For Lauder the place was full of ghosts. "Dear me!" he said; and "dear me!" again and again, as they walked among his old familiar haunts. Like a school or college revisited after an absence of years, the place seemed to him to have unaccountably dwindled, to look a little small and shabby, and to be inhabited by a meaner and less noble race. The artistic glory had certainly departed; and where, in these alien painters of another generation, was there material for the witty and light-hearted gatherings, the heady in-

vigoration of youthful and artistic communities that had glorified his earlier days? Gone, he told himself with a complacent wag of the head; for one must still be in the midstream of life to say "*Eheu, fugaces*" with the requisite smack of appreciation.

But if its human glories had departed, the the crowning glory of Barbizon, its wonderful sparkling air, was still to be enjoyed; and Lauder breathed it again with a familiar gladness. To Richard the whole place was new and wonderful; the amazing brightness and whiteness of the village street in the hot sunshine, the glimpses through gateways into little courtyards, smothered with flowers and greenery, the long shuttered plainness of Millet's house; the silence and remoteness, the world-forgetting atmosphere of the place, its contrast with the life of curtained rooms and shaded lights which they had just quitted, filled his mind to the brim with unwonted pleasures. They chose their rooms in one of the detached pavilions of the Hôtel de Forêt, where was no bustle of hotel life, but only windows opening wide on the soaring trees, and plunging you at a step into the deep sea of the forest. They unpacked, lunched in the open air, and strolled out. From the world of the village to the world of the forest was but a step; one moment they were under the open sky in the hot sunshine of the village street, where the tramway engine hissed and

bubbled; the next, the forest had swallowed them up, and they trod an enchanted floor, sunk in a cool submarine twilight, with the wind and the sunshine a hundred feet above their heads.

The magic of forests, and of this forest in particular, is a theme well-worn; but like so many things familiarized in language it remains ever new and strange in fact. Like so many others before them these two wandered off over the sparkling sand, beneath the network of the pines, and found their worldly interests hushed and themselves solemnized, like revellers who should have strayed into a cathedral. And now fatigue, pleasant fatigue of mind and body, began to fall upon them; nature put in her plea for the repayment of the advances they had been drawing; and on a slope of sand carpeted with pine-needles they lay down to sleep in the noontide quiet. The forest rolled away in dim distances about them. The few rays that filtered down through the leafy roof trod softly on the moss, as though they feared to awake some hidden life with their sun-kiss. Shy and sweet in these twilit recesses teemed the forest life, in silence only broken by a rustle of underwood or by a single startled note from a bird that had dived below the tree-top surface, where, far above him, the song of his mates mingled with the surflike murmur of branches. Distant voices echoed and answered one another through the green aisles, or sounded in laughter that seemed

to hover and ring in the air like the stroke of a bell. These elfish noises grew dimmer and more mingled together in Richard's ears as the curtain of sleep dropped slowly down about him; they set fairy thoughts loose in his mind, while the forest cast its spell upon him. *Be not afraid, the isle is full of voices*, he murmured to himself, half-awake, half-dreaming, with his last conscious effort; and then he fell into deep sleep. Lauder had dropped off before him; and while they slept the busy invisible army of nature's workmen in that place took possession of their bodies, sweeping out the dross of cities, extracting from their blood the poverties and impurities of the crowded world, and pouring into their veins pure and vigorous life from the inexhaustible reservoirs of the forest air. Sweet alchemy of sleep and of leafy places! How many tired bodies have not been rested and refreshed beneath the magic shades of Fontainebleau; how many tired and soiled minds have not found, in the vastness of that vigorous solitude, a tonic and renewing influence! Slumber beneath roofs may repose the flesh; if we would restore the spirit there must be some space of oblivion under stars and trees, where in mystery and absence from the body the soul may take her rest and refreshment.

Lauder was the first to awake. He came to himself in mid-afternoon, all trace of fatigue gone,

and yet with a pleasant drowsiness still lingering in his blood. Richard slept on, soundly but lightly; and as Lauder did not wish to wake him he drew a note-book from his pocket, and began to sharpen his pencil. The old habit of the place was upon him; in his sleep it had returned, so that there now lay upon his mind some shadow of the old torment of creation. He looked about him for a subject; considered, and obviously rejected, the sleeping Richard; and then settled down with an abstracted look, his pencil working uncertainly at first, and then, as his hand remembered its craft, more boldly and surely. The sketch finished, he sat for awhile in thought; and then, turning a page, began to write.

When Richard awoke the afternoon was far through. He lay quiet for awhile after he had opened his eyes, collecting his thoughts, and tasting the sense of renewal and refreshment with which his sleep had endowed him. Presently he stretched himself and, turning to Lauder, became aware of his occupation.

“What have you got there? I thought you were still asleep.”

“Something for you. Wait a minute. I’ve nearly finished — ‘Scaffolding of death’ — that will do, although it’s a bit cruel. Now tell me if I haven’t been drawing your dreams?”

Richard took the book and flushed as he looked

on its open page. For there was the face of his thoughts — Toni's face, happily commemorated in pencil. The sketch had the success of such things done in haste and confidence; it had the clever reticence of the hand that knows how far it can trust itself to be explicit, and how far it must merely suggest; Lauder would not have been ashamed to sign it in his Paris days. It was Toni thoughtful; leaning her chin on her hand, her brow wrinkled a little under the great drooping hat, her eyes absorbed in scrutiny; a memorable and arresting face — a face to love and weep for. Lauder watched Richard narrowly as he gazed on it, his lips parted, his breath held. "Now look over the page," he said.

He had written there a translation into words of his portrait — an almost equally successful sketch, although in a medium less familiar to him. Richard turned the page and read:

"Radiant" would be your first word on seeing her seated in the Rat Mort at four o'clock in the morning, in her Doucet gown and her Lewis hat, and her tawny hair smouldering in the feverish light of the lamps. Gay, too, with a childish gaiety and pleasure in the lights and the wine, the dances, the food, and the music — pleasure as of a child who claps hands at sight of a feast spread in her honor. Yet for all her youthful gaiety, you will often wonder if she is more than pretty.

Warm is her vital animation, wonderful are her golden oblique eyes, fair is her skin; but she has a bad, vampire mouth, and the little tongue shoots out to moisten the scarlet lips too often. Yet if you catch one of her rare moments of repose, the cloud of gravity and thoughtfulness that sometimes hovers for an instant on her brow, you will know that she is beautiful, with a rare and rather a tragic beauty. In thought and desire she is always ahead of the moment, as in talk she is always behind it; the present has no attraction for her, and she is on that account exasperating and unsatisfactory to fugitive lovers. But for those who study her and attain her with patience she has doubtless her own strange rewards. Waywardness and perversity play about her like summer lightning, that flower of inaudible thunder. She will and she won't. She loves the atmosphere, the trappings, the tubes and palettes of her art; its practice hardly interests her at all, except in rare moments that suggest a morbidity better left unexplored. She lies passionately about nothing at all, and is on such bad terms with the truth that she and it do not recognize each other.

Yet — you come back to her crown of youth, her animate harmony with the fountain-song of life, the lithe felinity of her body, the grace of her wild, swift movements, the vital glory that smoulders in her eyes; and the touch of her skin, silk

and velvet of the rose-petal, will cling to your lips long after the memory of her cruel mouth has faded.

Laugh, my little Toni, and dance yet while your sun shines! The three black ravens hover over your happiness; and ah! how close behind your face, fair with the fairness of love and the flesh, lies the dusty scaffolding of death.

Lauder saw him smile a little, and wince a little, as he read; when he had finished he turned back to the pencil sketch, and looked for some time at it.

“Wonderfully good,” he said, quietly. “Wonderfully good. But—how do you know so much about her?”

“Know? I know nothing except what any one can see who spends some hours in her company. She is your discovery, Richard; I’m afraid I never took much notice of her until I saw her through your eyes. But she improves on acquaintance. There’s a certain lithe grace—”

“How did you know about—the touch of her skin?” said Richard, still looking at the sketch.

“Guesswork, my dear boy; and I’m glad to see it was such a good guess. My dear Richard, how delightfully young you are—I believe you are blushing!”

“Nonsense,” said Richard with a smile. “But, joking apart, Lauder, I do not in the least mind

telling you that I am profoundly interested in the creature; I can't get her out of my head. I think her quite one of the most attractive and remarkable women I have ever seen. I know nothing about her life, and I don't think I want to. She's not an ordinary — well, I mean, she doesn't — she's not like — ”

“ She is certainly not promiscuous; and she is not to be confounded with all those amiable ladies at Maxim's. At the same time, there's something of the *gamine* about her; she is ready to sacrifice appearances and dignity for amusement at any moment. If you really want to be kind to her, give her a lecture; tell her to leave those people, and go and take rooms at Ritz's, or some first-rate place, and never be seen without a companion. She is much too young to be on her own, and too clever and successful to mistrust herself. Tell her — ”

“ I don't think I should much care to talk to her about it.”

Lauder shrugged his shoulders. “ No use blinking facts, old chap. It's not nice, I admit; it would be intolerable in connection with any one you cared about. That's why I always keep to mere acquaintance and surface friendships with such people.” He looked narrowly at Richard. “ I know what you want; you want me to advise you to take her as your mistress. Wait a minute,” he went on, as Richard began to speak. “ In the

first place, you couldn't afford it; in the second, neither of you would be happy — you'd want to marry her, or some damned nonsense of that sort; in the third, I don't quite see how she would work in with *pierres perdues*, balance cranes, and the Holy Blessed Trinity. I think the old sea-dogs at Deptford would have something to say."

Richard was looking far away through a blue-green glade of the forest. "If she loved —" he began; and then stopped, looking grave.

"And if she did, would it be quite fair, do you think? The point of honor is naturally an unfamiliar one, but it's there all the same. Remember you are dealing with a topsyturvy world, where every social rule is inverted. Honorable intentions in a case like this don't mean love, or hearts, or a life's devotion, or any emotional stuff of that sort; they mean money. Here is a woman — not of the class that sells herself promiscuously or strikes bargains beforehand, but who is willing — well, let us say to take a liberal view of conduct in the case of any one she likes, the condition being that he shall support her in that state of luxury and extravagance to which it has pleased God to call her. Where does the lover come in? — the lover, moreover, who doesn't intend even marriage — and remember that she would despise marriage — where does he come in, with his idylls and heart's devotion? Believe me, there is no room for him."

"Damn it, Lauder, your knowingness wearies me sometimes. Because a woman has adopted that way of life, do you pretend she has no heart?"

"It's you who weary me, Richard, mixing up facts with sentiment. Don't you see that she mustn't indulge her heart at the expense of her profession? Don't you see that it is the one luxury that she can't afford, because it is the one luxury that no one will pay for? A girl like Toni has deliberately chosen to take her love, or what stands for it, into the market; and she is far too sensible not to see that she can't have it both ways; or, if she didn't see it, a man who should try to make her believe that it was possible would be, to say the least of it, damned unfriendly."

"I think in any case, my dear Lauder, we're getting a little far from the facts. There's no question of Toni's falling in love — or of mine either," he added with a touch of bravado; "and," he added, turning to Lauder with a smile, "you and I aren't even going to pretend to fall out on any question of the sort. I bow absolutely to your experience and discretion. But now I'll tell you what I propose. I like Toni — she interests us both; we like Elsa too; I'm sorry for those poor girls stuffing in Paris this hot weather; and I propose to telephone or wire to them, and ask them out here to spend the day. We can flatter them with a gorgeous lunch, the fresh air will

do them a lot of good, and I think it would be amusing to study them in this environment."

"Anything you like," said Lauder, genially. "They won't come, but that's a detail. And it amuses me greatly to observe how quickly you have tired of sylvan solitude!"

"Oh, rubbish! I can get that any time; besides, those three are too nice and wholesome to damage the atmosphere. Come along."

They walked back through the cool twilight of the forest, and out again into the bright street. The hotel in the Rue de Calais was not on the telephone, they discovered; so a wire was carefully drawn up and despatched. There was no small difficulty in getting off so long a wire in English from the little post-office. Lauder regarded the whole thing as an empty and unproductive jest; but Richard was determined, and arranged all details.

"I bet you a sovereign they won't come," was Lauder's confident verdict. "They may say they will to-night; but when it comes to getting up at nine to-morrow it'll be another story. They won't have gone to bed until five; and when they call her Toni will say: 'Oh, no, my dear, I am too tired, really. I never was so tired in all my life!'"

"Well, it'll be a test," said Richard, smiling at the probability of the picture. "No harm if they don't come; we shall still enjoy ourselves. And

now that that's settled, let us dine; that sleep in the forest air has made me devilish hungry."

They dined, for the sake of Lauder's associations, in the long room at Siron's, still decorated with the daubs of the colony, but vastly changed since his day. The clatter still went on, but it seemed to have a less significant note; there was less of wit in the talk, less mirth in the laughter. After dinner the piano, as of yore, was punished by one of the number, and songs came forth with the pipes and the villainous brandy; but they were even less tolerable as music, and less considerable as humor, than they had been ten years ago. At least, so Lauder assured himself; but when we call up scenes of youth or past enjoyment we summon a ghost who walks in a glory, and in whose footprints the flowers stand uncrushed.

They walked back through a night black and starless; but presently the moon rose, and sent slender and ghostly fingers parting the foliage in the forest. They walked for a little while in the great leafy arcades, silenced by the charm of the hour, drugged by the inimitable scent and fragrance of the nocturnal woodland. They went early to their rooms in the airy pavilion under the trees; and Richard, after he had gone to bed and put out his candle, lay for a long time looking out of the open window. Above him the black masses of the trees were blocked out against the silvery background; the village had gone to bed;

it was peaceful with a quietness that was far more than absence of sound, and had a positive quality of its own. Presently, with a clear, passionate thrill that floated on the silence as the white moonbeams floated on the velvet darkness, a nightingale began to sing. At first in low piping notes that dropped singly into the night; then in broken melodic phrases; at last a welling fountain of tone, endless, effortless, like the love-laughter of angels. The song held him spellbound with its utterance of rich unearthly sweetness; it woke in him a sense of vague longing, vague sadness; it wreathed him, as he fell asleep, in charms and dreams that were like ripples spreading on the eternal sea of silence.

V

LAUDER was awakened the next morning from a sound sleep by Richard, who stood over his bed with an open telegram in his hand. "Read that," he said, with a note of triumph in his voice.

It was dated the night before, and contained these words: "All coming by ten train. — Toni." Lauder sat up, broad awake. "Heavens! I didn't expect this," he said. He looked at the telegram again. "'All coming.' Who, in Heaven's name, are 'all?' Are we to have an inundation from Maxim's? Because, if so, I'm going to sneak off by the next train, and leave you to cope with them."

"Nonsense!" laughed Richard, who was in high spirits. "It only means Matilda and Elsa and Toni. You know how they all stick together. I can imagine the scene last night: 'I'll come if you come; I won't go unless you go,' and so on."

"Yes, and I know what'll happen. They'll change their minds, or miss the train this morning; or the other two will catch it, and Toni won't get up," he added, mischievously.

Richard looked crestfallen for a moment. "Well," he said, "I'll bet you a sovereign they all three come. Anyhow, you've got to get up and order a luncheon worthy of the occasion; and of course we must go in to Melun to meet them."

At the appointed time they were pacing the platform, Richard pretending confidence, although with genuine misgiving; Lauder rehearsing all kinds of imaginary scenes between the three women, and drawing vivid pictures of them, after a late night at the Rat Mort, arriving cross and peevish, and scornful of the rustic entertainment at Barbizon. Richard hardly realized how eagerly he looked for Toni's coming until he saw the train heading for the long platform, and felt his heart leap. It drew in and stopped — a long train. A great many carriage-doors opened and discharged a great variety of passengers; but among them, alas! was no gay trio. The two men walked hurriedly along the train, peering into the carriages. "They may be asleep, or quarrelling," said Lauder, "and not have noticed the name of the station." But there was no friendly face in the whole length of the train, and Richard watched it depart with a feeling of bitter disappointment.

"And now I'll tell you something to cheer you up," said Lauder, taking his arm. "There's another train in ten minutes. They are sure to have missed the first by about a minute, as none of them speak French, and it starts from a remote

corner of the station; but if they are coming at all (which I still doubt) they'll be in the second. There are the signals."

Lauder proved to be right in his supposition, and wrong in his doubt. As the train drew up, a little hand was seen waving from a distant carriage-window, and Toni's face, all smiles and eagerness, looked out along the platform.

"Now we *are* in for it," muttered Lauder. "I owe you a sovereign, Richard."

They hurried down to the carriage, from which they elicited in turn Toni, Elsa, and Matilda, all looking as fresh as possible, quietly dressed, for a wonder, in garments more or less suitable for a country expedition, not a suggestion of paint or jewelry, and all talking and laughing at the same time. Matilda looked quite matronly, and entirely respectable and domestic; and the unwonted early hours and shaking-up in the express had not in the least disturbed her boisterous good humor.

"Well, here we are, boys — my, I *am* out of breath — and I'll bet you didn't expect us — and you wouldn't have seen us if it had been left to those two. I thought I should never get them up; but I said, 'Look here, girls, it isn't every day we get two such nice boys to ask us out just out of good-fellowship, and I'm not going to miss it. Matilda's going out to drink milk and pick what-d'ye-call-ums in the country before she's a

day older,' I said. And I bundled them out, and we told the coshey to drive like the devil, and we missed the first train, and caught the second, or missed the second and caught the first — I was so mixed I couldn't tell which — and here we are. 'My word,' I said, 'it isn't every day we get two such nice' — what d'ye call this place? Melon? Can we get any melons here? I love melons, with the insides scooped out; the worst of them is they make your face so wet; and — I say, boys, what time do we have lunch? Where's the place? I could do with a bit of something after that journey."

"And oh, I tell you, my dear," broke in Toni, "I never thought I should get up! I never was so tired in all my life. But Matilda, she say all the time, it was not every day she have the chance to go out with two such nice boys; and I not like to disappoint her," she added mischievously to Richard.

They were walking out of the station. "So that was the only reason you came?" he said, looking down on her, pleasure at seeing her again sparkling in his eyes.

"Oh, don't be silly, my dear. I come because I want to, and I *sink* you like to see me again, what?"

"It was really I who brought them both," said Elsa. "They'd never have got up if I hadn't brought them home and got them to bed early —

only two o'clock; and I put a paper on my door telling them to call me at eight. And I hope you're glad to see us," she laughed to Lauder, "because I'm jolly glad to be here, out of that stuffy hotel."

Indeed, they all seemed genuinely delighted, and in the highest spirits. Lauder in his capacity of general courier had chartered two open carriages, so that they could drive back instead of waiting for the steam-tram; and into the first of these he handed Elsa, having stipulated beforehand that he was not to be given over to a *tête-à-tête* with Matilda. It had been decided that the buxom dame was to be treated with every deference and respect, as the distinguished chaperon of the party; she was duly hoisted into the second carriage, Richard and Toni following her, and the cavalcade set off in a great deal of happiness and good humor. While they were still within the boundaries of Melun a due decorum was observed; but once beyond the *octroi* and out on the country road there was a certain relaxation of this effort. Matilda took off her gloves and her veil, to mark the informality of the occasion; and Toni, nestling back into the cushions, put up two little daintily shod feet on Richard's knee (he sat opposite to her) and reclined luxuriously. All the abstraction, dissipation of mind, and lack of attention that had characterized her in her Paris surroundings dropped from her; she actually looked

at Richard for more than two seconds together, as though she were now for the first time able to recognize his existence. He realized now that this was what he had been wanting. In Paris he had been only an accessory, a furniture of the scenes in which she was set; here at last he was the principal person, and he noticed with delight that she evidently regarded carriage, landscape, sunshine, and living breezes as mere accessories and appurtenances of her cavalier. Matilda rattled on in breathless reminiscence of the journey and their preparations for it; for over minds like hers, alive only in and for the moment, the sponge of oblivion seems to be continually passing, and the events of the past twenty-four hours receive all the concentrated mental attention which with most of us has to serve as many years. Toni, who did everything thoroughly, was too busy taking in her new environment, and enjoying it, to talk much; and Richard was too happy in looking at her to do more than throw in a word now and then — enough to keep the stream of eloquence flowing. She lay back against the cushions, the brim of her hat shading her eyes, the sunshine striking through her veil and flecking her face; and whenever her eyes met Richard's they smiled upon him with a new and growing kindness, and with an interest and approval that set the blood singing in his veins. He seemed to himself to be living in some kind of miraculous dream, where

events moved with a magic suddenness unknown in our waking lives; in which to desire was to possess, and to wish was to be transported into fairy worlds of flowers and love and sunshine. No words had been spoken; and yet here was the woman of his dreams smiling on him, and the two of them carried as though by some kind Arabian genius out of the world into a garden of pleasures.

As the horses were walking up a slight hill, Elsa got out of her carriage and came running back along the road. Some pretty laughing quarrel had taken place between her and Lauder; she refused to drive with him and got into the second carriage beside Richard. Lauder came back with rueful entreaties; but as he got into the carriage at one side she got out on the other, and the vehicle became a kind of thoroughfare for the playing of this game. The example was too much for Toni, who got out also; and presently they were all four chasing about the road like butterflies in the bright sunshine. Elsa found some wild flowers in the field bordering the road, and entangled Lauder in an effort to identify them; and nothing would serve Toni but she must be lifted up on the bank to gather more.

"Oh," she cried, "pretty, my dear, pretty! I find flowers just like this at my home in Posen. How I love flowers! See, my dear, I make you buttonhole — one, zwei, three, four — come here, Reechard, I put them in for you. There! What

you say? Happee? Oh, yes, my dear, I love the country. It reminds me of my home, where we have, oh, such a nice garten. I am so glad we came. What? Come here, I gif you somesing else." And she pulled his face down, and planted a kiss on the tip of his chin, and then ran off to Matilda with a bunch of flowers. The flowers were the commonest kind — dandelions and buttercups and clover; and if pathos had been a possible note, there might have been something of the pathetic in that eager gathering of weeds, because they were gay and green and yellow, and grew in the sunshine and the open air. But there was a vigor and simplicity and gusto in the happiness of these wicked women that snuffed out the pathetic; they were in the world on their own terms, and finding it a good place; respect them if you will, but do not pity them. There are many excellent and moral persons who might exchange all their knowledge of botany for a little of Toni's pleasure in a dandelion, with a deal of advantage to the world at large.

Laughter and nonsense, and running to and fro between the carriages, and sorties into the wood to discover new flowers, made the journey seem short; the ladies were infinitely delighted with the appearance of Barbizon, which they declared to be like a stage village; and when at length they stood on the little balcony overlooking the forest, they were charmed almost into silence by the spell

of wonder which it threw upon them. For a moment they enjoyed the picture of that dim green solitude with all their might: even Matilda, whom nothing could charm quite into silence, was moved to artistic reminiscence.

"I say," she said, "it's too pretty, you know. I wouldn't have missed this for the world. Look here, John" (for so it was she addressed Lauder), "that bit in there, with the trees and that little hollow, it's just like what you see in a picture."

He told her it had been often painted.

"There now! I knew I'd seen it somewhere. Why, it's every bit as pretty as a picture. My word, I am glad I came. We'll go in there, and sit down under those trees, won't we? But look here, boys, what price lunch? And then after that we'll go into the forest."

Lauder had retained the principal chamber in the pavilion to serve as a dressing-room for them, and thither they now repaired. It was a noble apartment, with a fine polished floor, a ceiling painted and inlaid with rare woods, excellent tapestry on the walls, a great open carved chimney, and a magnificent state bed, wonderfully carved and inlaid, with a panel over it bearing a famous signature. This room was another surprise and pleasure; but its effect on Matilda was startling.

She drew a long breath as they came in through the open French windows. "Look here," she

said, "this is a bit of all right." She appeared to meditate for a moment, and then added, in a hard, business-like voice: "I'm going to stop here. I'm going to sleep in that bed, if I die for it. Matilda lying in state! What do you say, girls? We can manage for one night, can't we, and all go back together to-morrow? I don't leave here until I've slept in that bed, anyway. Keska-say-ka-sah?"

And so it was eventually arranged. Two more rooms, one in an adjoining pavilion, were secured; and the party went to lunch with the appetites and spirits of children on a pleasure excursion. The meal was a complete success. Every one talked at once, every one declared that food had never tasted so good, or wine so refreshing. Richard and Lauder had no opportunities for private conversation, but they exchanged glances of amused intelligence at each development of this rapid adventure. There was no awkwardness about the party — thanks, principally, to the good nature of Matilda. It was understood that Richard was Toni's special property, and that Lauder devoted himself especially to Elsa, with whom he held long and confidential conversations; but Matilda never for one moment allowed herself to appear unprovided for. This crude creature, on a holiday from a life that to the normal mind must seem even at its best one of dismal unpleasantness, shone with kind and unselfish virtues. She ex-

pected no attentions, and was flattered by the respect and consideration shown to her by her hosts; she played admirably in her new and unaccustomed rôle of *grande dame*; and she neither permitted herself to interfere, nor appeared to hold pointedly aloof from her companions. In a word, the little festival, which in other hands might have been so differently conducted, was a model of propriety and success; and the effect upon the three women was marked. They seemed determined not to fall short of the position which was, for the moment, offered them; they gained, with every hour of this unwonted consideration, in a refined self-respect which, although it was often overlaid by the gaudier manners of their class, was yet obviously native and inherent; and their accession of naturalness involved no loss of charm or gaiety. A visit was paid to the village shop in quest of soap, brushes, sponges, and other matters consolatory to pretty women parted from luggage and maids; and it was a very light-hearted company that went off wandering and laughing into the forest. Matilda did not accompany them; she had, in her own phrase, "done herself tip-top;" she panted for the reposeful dignities of the state chamber; and there, within drawn curtains, the quartette left her.

The forest threw upon each of them a different spell. Lauder and Elsa lingered near the medallions of Rousseau and Millet. The English girl

was the least happy of the party; the semi-social atmosphere in which she found herself had painful reminders for her of a forfeited place in the world, and Lauder's friendly companionship set her longing for things lost. As they sat and talked, a sense of the tragic mess we make of some women's lives was brought home to him with unwonted force. He was not really cynical; he had a human heart of pity, big for the world at large, although he generally held individuals at arm's length; and this pretty girl who talked to him so quietly under the forest-trees, whose acquaintance he had so lightly made and would so lightly drop, began to be shown to him in the lights and scenes of a tragedy. They passed from light conversational play to the you and I of real earnest; he led her to talk of herself, and a little of her present life.

"Oh, I hate it! I hate it!" she said, passionately. "I hardly ever let myself think about it, for when I do I send people away, and then I have no money. I must have money—I have people dependent on me; and what can I do? I have tried to get situations as a secretary, but I don't know enough; I could be a nursery governess, but who would let me come near their children? At the places I went to, some of them said odious things to me, and the kindest said I was too good-looking!" Her sweet dark eyes brimmed for a moment, but she dashed the tears away.

"Some women seem to manage better; if I could meet some one I liked, who would keep me and be good to me, it wouldn't be bad; but somehow I seem to make a mess of things; and if I liked any one, the bare mention of money would make me ill. You gave us a long lecture the other night about how we ought never to be seen at places like Maxim's, but keep to the smartest places, and wear wonderful clothes, and have a companion, and be exclusive; but you want a cold business head for that — and then, if you only knew the sort of men who pay those prices! Here and there you come across a gentleman, like Toni's prince; but there aren't so many of them, and look what a mess she made of that! And then when it comes to the point, one sometimes feels one would rather starve. I was having tea the other day at the Elysée Palace, and I got a note from a man who offered me five hundred pounds if I'd stay a week with him. I wanted money, and it looked like a good chance — but when I saw him! I simply couldn't; so you see I'm no use at all, and have to manage just the best way I can."

Lauder said nothing. His philosophies melted away before the problem of this life; he realized that Elsa was what she was by accident, and not by nature; that she was perhaps the very model of a woman formed by nature for motherhood and domestic happiness, but cast — with what

cruel irony — beyond the pale of these kindly shelters. In the quiet forest beneath the far-away rumor of the tree-tops, in the noontide hush among the filtered sunlight, Terror and Pity came and sat beside him — terror of those grinding wheels of life that go on and on forever, crushing indiscriminately the true and the false that happen to come within their path, pity for the warm, healthy creature beside him, young and vital and firm-hearted, suddenly thrown aside from the track of life. He could only hold out his own hand and take hers in a friendly grasp.

“Tell me about it,” he said.

She began at the beginning, and told the story of her life without reserve or affectations. As she talked, Lauder seemed to see a tragedy pass before his eyes in a scroll of pictures. The little child playing in her Irish home by the seashore, much petted, a little spoiled by the doctor, her father, but growing up on the whole happily; the clever, pretty girl coming home from school in England, and turning the heads of all the young men in the neighborhood; motherless now, and managing her father's home with a gay capacity that made her sought for as the crown of many homes; the bride, setting out in a flutter of hope and romance to begin life in her new home; the young wife, battling with disillusion, enduring in silence and secrecy the brutal cruelty of her

drunken husband — and then a curtain covering that fiendish blow of his, and the destruction of her unborn child. And then (her father being dead) the hand of help and the whisper of promise coming in that black hour; the brave step, the year of peace — and afterward the cruel moment of abandonment, the desperate struggle to live, and the final acceptance of the only possible terms. The only possible terms! Yes, Lauder realized that ugly fact — that for any one so young, so pretty, so friendless, so unfitted for any skilled occupation, our social order has no recognition. She must not sit at the feast of politeness, nor eat at the table of social life; the world of her time and country has no place for her, and refuses her bread on any terms but those which it deems disgraceful. Impossible even to help her but on the same bitter terms! Yet with a kind of awe Lauder realized, as she sat all dappled over with the shy sunbeams, so brave and radiant, so sad and blooming, that the evil inflicted by the world of men stops short at the armor of a soul in possession of itself. Through all her miseries, Elsa had at least arrived at that spiritual anchorage; she knew something of the worst and best of life, and still she could smile and be happy. Well for her that there is an appeal from the social law; that even without the pale, apart from the envied company at the feast, there are places where nature and not man rules, and where such

as she, eating their bread of bitterness, may taste with it a new salt of truth, and find a new peace in its savor.

As Lauder listened to her story, and as he looked at her beside him, he found it in his heart to wish that he was capable of some of those rash, brave impulses that may carry us to starry heights so far beyond the blinder prudence of the worldly wise; to wish that he could hold out a hand to this clean-souled woman, and save her life with his! The chances were that she would make a good comrade in marriage, for all her genius was for that difficult partnership; the mother, too, of happy children, although his social world would be closed both to her and to them. In a corner of his mind he saw those clear possibilities; with the rest of his intelligence he was aware the thing would never be done, knew it to be against all his instincts and habits, saw himself unfit for it, and fell to wondering on all the wreckage that floats past us on the tides of life, all the chances, some within reach, some needing a brave push to sea in our cockle-shell if we are to bring them safe to shore, that set toward and away from us with the drift of time. . . . He was roused by her voice, speaking in a lighter tone.

"It's too bad of me to spoil this nice day by talking of such dismal things; let us forget them," she said. "Now tell me about Rousseau and Millet."

Richard and Toni had walked on through the forest, which kept opening its green arms before and closing up behind them. Her talk rippled on, heedless of his silence; impersonal talk, more the expression of the effect produced on her mind by all she saw, and immediately coined into speech, than conversation addressed to any human being. Richard for a time delighted in her unconsciousness of himself, which left him free to observe her. The transitions of her mind were as quick and flashing as the play of sunbeams across her face; she stepped lightly, like a wild animal at home there, across the deep carpet of sand and pine-needles; she vibrated with life and with the quick precision of her senses. The sudden scared swoop of a bird across their path would startle her into a pleasure she must express by the clapping of hands; anything more beautiful than her gusto and delight in the forest world Richard thought he had never seen. She was at no time an affected or artificial creature, but every shred of acquired manner that she possessed had dropped from her like a garment, and left her as free and natural and as full of savage graces as a child. Again Richard felt, as he had felt before, an almost uncanny sense of being in the presence of a creature of another planet, who lived at a higher power and breathed a more vital air than ours. She was like one who had been plunged in the very waters of youth, to emerge shining

with the dews and fires of the eternal fountain, a thing of the morning, of morning's mystery and brightness when she steals shy and golden from the edge of clouds to race with their shadows across the meadows.

Presently she was tired and must sit down. As abruptly as the change from her dancing, tripping movements to the stillness of repose, she turned the battery of her woman's nature full on Richard, leaning back and looking at him through her long golden eyelashes. He faced her, looking eagerly and gravely at her lovely and inscrutable face.

"What you thinking about?" she said. They had tried speaking in her native tongue, but Richard had found his scientific German a hopeless messenger of his thoughts, and as unintelligible to her as her border inflections were to him; so they had returned to English, of which Toni could speak rather more than she understood.

"I am thinking," said Richard, "that you are the most wonderful little person I have ever seen."

She nodded her head gravely several times, like one who hears again a familiar but important truth. "You think I am pretty — truly?" she asked.

"Pretty! You are the loveliest thing in the world," said Richard, smiling.

"No, my dear, you make me angry — really — if you say that. I am pretty, my dear, but beautiful! — no. Ah, you should see my little sister.

She is beautiful, lovely, my dear; I never see anything so lovely in all my life. Oh, no," she continued, as Richard protested, "I think nothing of pretend. If a thing is so, I know it, my dear, and if it is not so, I always rather know what is true than pretend somesing nicer. What? Vy you say silly things to me, if you like me?" She shook her head. "I am afraid you do not like me, my dear, or else you say not those silly things!"

Richard came eagerly beside her, took her hand and held it to his lips for a long time. "Toni, don't you know I love you?" His voice shook a little.

She let her hand rest in his, and looked at him, apparently quite unmoved by his emotion, even smiling a little at it. "You think so?" she said. "I know better, my dear," and then she broke into a rippling laugh. "Poor, poor fellow; he is in love with Toni — oh, so madly in love!"

"Why, you dear little devil," said Richard, joining in the laugh, "you make me wonder myself! Anyhow, you've bewitched me; and yet — dear pretty one, let us be happy!" And he looked into her deep eyes with a grave and very appealing eagerness.

She looked upwards, far away through the spaces of the trees, to the blue deeps of the sky. Then she turned to him.

"Listen," she said. "No, sit over there, where

I see your face. Now" — she spoke slowly and carefully at first — "I tink you say not quite truly that you love me. I am not a fool, my dear, and I am not blind either. I have watch you when you think I do not see you. All the time I watch you, and I say: 'This boy thinks he wants me, oh, *very* badly.' You like me because I am not stupid, like all these other girls; and often when you say things, none of them understand you — you and your friend — but *I* understand. Also I understand that you are not — what you call it? — quick, fast; you do not go about with vomens. And I say to myself: 'I like this boy; he is chic, smart, but he is nice; he is — what you say? — good comrade, he would be a good friend, if he not fall in love with you!' And then you think you fall in love with me straight off! I tell you, my dear, it is not. You are too nice to fall in love with me; you are — what? — in love with some one of your own world, is it not? No? . . . Oh, you silly boy, I like you more than I tell you; it is not good for you or me; but if you knew my life, you would know love not to come so easily, my dear; love is not so easy or pleasant. It is hard and cruel — ach, Gott! How cruel!" She was speaking faster now, and with a new vibrating note of emotion in her voice. "Once I thought I love, my dear, and I give my silly heart, and all people was hard, bitter, cruel to me! Now I give nothings, and

pretend, and all people pet me and give me diamonds and money, and say, like you: 'O Toni, we are madly in love with you!' And then," she continued, as though she were trying to convince herself with arguments, "one loves not the outside, my dear, but, what you call it? inside, spirits; you know my outsides, but what you know of my insides? Love is not of a face."

Richard spoke as though in a dream. "I love your body, my dear pretty one, because it is beautiful, and I don't believe anything so beautiful can be anything but adorable 'insides,' as you call it. Little girl, look at me: I love you, I long for you."

She shook her head, yet smiling tenderly as she looked at him. "O silly one," she said, "I am not always like this. This place remind me of my home, where I was, *oh*, so happy!" Her eyes brightened, and she suddenly put her head close to his and spoke in a low voice, with a delicious smile on her face. "Listen," she said, "I tell you a game. For this time, while we are here, we pretend, if you like — we pretend that you are in love with me, and that I am, *oh*, madly in love with you!" and the merry laugh pealed again. "What? Yes? We shall? Very well, my dear, I love you, *oh*, ever so much!" She looked at him mockingly for a minute, then dropped her eyes, and let her head fall on his shoulder, where his lips found her warm lips and clung to them

with a passion in which there was indeed little of make-believe. The forest sighed and spoke to them in its thousand voices, the birds fluttered and piped far above, distant voices laughed and echoed through the green vaults; and for Richard Grey there was a full cup of that pagan joy at which the forest had hinted. His heart and his blood sang together as he held Toni's dear yielding form in his arms; he had a sense of gratitude, of love for the eternal capricious beneficence that he felt was busy in this moment of his life; and he could have found it in his heart to build an altar and offer a sacrifice, and pour out a libation to the shy gods of happiness that seemed to be lurking in the leafy depths.

From that moment the spell was upon them. Toni became as absorbed in him as he was in her; asked him questions about himself, and interrupted his answers to tell him of her childhood. She was a child again; her gravity had gone, and with it her independence; she held his hand in hers as they rambled off again, now climbing some hill whence there was a view across the tree-top ocean, now plunging into depths of deepest green twilight. She dragged him hither and thither gathering flowers, which she was obliged to throw away to make room for new ones; she sat down to make a daisy chain for Matilda, and spent quite a quarter of an hour on it. A daisy chain for Matilda! It was an odd decoration for the dame,

he thought; and then, like the pang of a knife-thrust, went through him another thought — that the weaving of daisies was an odd occupation for Toni's slender fingers! He strangled it as a disloyalty, as unclean sentimentality, and told himself that purity was not a technical thing, and that she had more in common with the daisies than many a technically pure woman; and he stooped down and kissed her as she sat over her task with puckered brows, and had the reward of seeing her face break into a heavenly smile of tenderness for him. On their way home they stopped at the Hôtel des Charmettes, and sat down in the pebbled courtyard to drink orangeade; and while they were waiting Toni picked up a dozen pebbles from the ground and showed him a German child's game of throwing them up and catching them, in which she became as absorbed as in anything else.

"What you do?" she asked him suddenly, while they were sitting and enjoying the pleasant shade of the trees after their walk in the long street. "What you do all the time in England?"

"I'm an engineer," said Richard.

"What? Engineer? What's engineer?" she asked.

"I make harbors and lighthouses," he answered, smiling.

She hardly understood, and did not waste any time in trying.

"How much you make by that in a year?" she asked; and, when Richard had told her, exclaimed, laying her hand on his arm, "O my poor boy, my poor, poor boy! And I have been letting you pay for all of us here!"

Richard, who had hitherto regarded himself as rather well off, did not know whether to be amused or offended at this tribute of unaffected sympathy; but he soon found it impossible to make her understand that the value of money was in any way relative to one's needs. She thought in thousands where he thought in tens.

"What clubs do you belong to?" was her next question; and this time she was satisfied with his answer, the names and standing of the two clubs he mentioned being familiar to her for reasons which Richard tried not to understand.

"And you belong to those clubs and have only that much money? What? O my poor boy! Look here, my dear; I am rich — oh, I have *lots* of money, my dear. I give you some — I lend you a thousand, you see. What?" And when he had laughingly explained the impossibility of any such benevolent arrangement, she abandoned that subject in its turn with her usual alacrity.

For the rest, their talk was delightful and intimate. She spoke much of her childhood and girlhood, of the man who had started her as a dancer in Vienna, of her success there, of the prince with whom she had gone to live in Russia, and the

house and estates over which she had been mistress; but of her nearer past not a word was spoken, nor of the future. All that was blotted out from her mind, it became unreal in the forest atmosphere. And they talked much of each other — the talk of lovers. Of the nature and degree of their love, who shall be wise enough to speak? Other than enduring things are true, and the banners of life and love are carried forward independently of our moral standards. But in Richard's mind there was rooted and growing the veritable tree on which blooms the fatal fruit; and into his heart at any rate we may have some glimpse. The pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh were his brave portion, boldly embraced for the sweetness they cradled. The cloudy and fiery pillar of his destiny that had so long seemed to pause was moving now; and he followed it without consideration and without misgiving. Of Toni's life he refused to think in those golden hours; for where love inhabits he sends a messenger before his face to sweep out the lodging, to perfume it with the costly spikenard of devotion, to garnish it with the images he would find there, and to prepare it, with a voice of tears and warning, for the kingdom that is at hand.

But the obscure depths of Toni's heart hold their mystery against all our imaginative light. The pleasures of blindness and illusion were not for her; she was condemned to a clear knowledge

of the facts, and to an experience of men's minds under the domination of the flesh such as sages may envy, and no one but unhappy women achieve. We cannot wholly separate the body from the spirit, except in corporeal death; to offend with the body is to offend in some measure with the soul; and for damage or indignity offered to the body there is doubtless some obscure tribute exacted from its radiant and intangible shadow. No use to pretend, then, that although this girl had sold her body, the spirit so intimately linked with it remained inviolably her own. Some blunting and degrading of that bright metal had been the inevitable result; some dimming of the mirror in which we see the images of things loved. And yet the flesh was there, unsoiled by its betrayals, flying nature's tender signals; the heart to beat, the pulses to quicken, the eyes to melt, the skin to telegraph its ecstatic messages; and they who would question the security of love's foundations must first be sure in what element of our transient being he sits enthroned. Enough, surely, that these two were happy, and at their best; that they wandered through the little village as though they walked an enchanted land; that they tasted a rapture that is the birthright of all human beings, and were quickened with that forerunner of the creative impulse which passes like a wind to and fro in the universe.

They all met at dinner on the lamplit balcony,

Matilda full of the praises of sleep and the simple life; Toni and Richard at first subject to a little gentle chaff from Lauder, and a mild sympathy from Elsa, who looked incredulously at the subdued Toni. They all sat talking for some time afterward, the best of friends; and presently, the long day in the open air beginning to tell upon them, the three guests decided for bed. Matilda was escorted, with candles and much laughter, to her lying in state in the painted chamber, where Lauder and Richard, obeying a very happy impulse of flattery and consideration, gallantly saluted her before leaving. Lauder took Elsa across the garden to her room in another pavilion, and saw that she had everything she wanted. She fidgeted about for a few minutes, and then, as he was turning away, she spoke.

"Do you know," she said, "I want to tell you — we've all enjoyed everything so much to-day — it's been a thing quite outside our ordinary lives — and you've made me so happy by your kindness — you don't know what it means — I —"

"Oh, nonsense," said Lauder from the steps; "it was very good of you to come, and to put up with this country picnicking. We've enjoyed having you here no end. And as for our friends across there — well, they seem quite happy, don't they?"

She looked rather wistfully across to where the light from Toni's bedroom shone through the

trees. Then she looked at Lauder. "I wish," she said, and then stopped. "If there was anything —" she stopped again. "Oh, I wish there was some way I could show you how grateful I am. But I've nothing to offer — that I should care to offer you," she added.

She looked so sweet, standing there framed in the door, the candle in her hand lighting up the wistful face under its shadow of dark hair, her pale green dress falling in long, sweeping lines. Lauder hesitated for the fraction of a second, and then spoke in his ordinary tone. "Will you offer me a kiss?" he said; "or would you rather I asked for it?"

Her eyes brimmed with tears; she understood; and bending down she took his chin between her fingers, and printed one light kiss on his mouth. "Good night," she said; and the door closed behind her.

VI

SOME kindly mist falls upon the eyes of all whom love visits. The miraculous conversation of the flesh is beyond our words and symbols, and far beyond our moralities; the heart may listen, the mind may watch, but it is the body, and the soul of nature that is within the body, that utters its voice in these rapt hours. Love unhallowed, love unsanctified by our laws, is love still; the song is still a song, although we follow it to shipwreck; but he who loves wholly and bravely cleanses the thing he loves, and takes it within his heart inviolable and undefiled. The half-hearted may halt and quaver, and calculate the cost, and hold themselves back on the evidence of eyes that take the world's view; they have their reward. They escape some of the fires and punishments with which our wandering destinies are beset; they stay without the ring of barbed sorrows that are planted about the gardens where grows the eternal fruit. They march with the wise and prudent, that good company who keep the standards of life flying; but they forego the knowledge of things that are revealed to babes.

Nature's children! They are of the whole-minded, the hot-hearted; they stumble along a difficult path, not seldom a lonely one, often a dim track that promises nothing but the fruit of going on, and denies them the ease and company on the broad road worn by many feet. Yet they too have their reward.

No thought of hesitation was in Richard's mind that night; no scruple, or souring, jealous whisper of a past that was not his, and that was nameless in the presence of his love, withheld him from the joy offered him by the Fates; he did not even consider the terms on which it was offered, but received it with the gratitude of his whole heart. All day long he had been conscious of the pagan spirit that seemed to be native in the forest; all day long, as Toni had drawn to him, and begun to look with tenderness into his eyes, he had felt the heavenly certainty of happiness within him. The gravity and quietness that had fallen upon her, the starry lights that visited in her eyes, the little involuntary shivers of her body when he had touched her, — all spoke of the influence of the same great spirit that had thrown its charm over them.

He opened his window softly, and stepped out on the dewy grass. Black lay the garden under the great sombre trees, and silent; for the nightingales hushed their song even at the light sound of his footstep. Softly he walked across the fra-

grant darkness to where a light glimmered in the pavilion, and tapped at Toni's window. In a moment she was there, opened it, and stood with a smile of welcome on her face, her finger on her lips enjoining silence. He stole in and folded her in his arms, and felt her body thrill like a fiddle-string to the touch of the bow. She lifted her head from his shoulder, and looked out into the night.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, "it is sweet in the garden!"

"Come," he said, and wrapped her in an overcoat he had lent her to serve as a dressing-gown.

They stole out again into the darkness, and sat down on a wooden step beside the lawn. "Now listen," he said. The silence was complete; they could hear each other breathing. Not a leaf stirred, not a sigh sounded in the blackness.

Then, a few low sweet notes first, and a trill or two, began the song of the nightingale. Louder and louder, fuller and sweeter, the invisible bird of passion unrolled his endless silver banner of song that flowed out upon the silence and darkness, and seemed to fall in festoons about them. He paused in the full tide of music; another voice from another tree answered him; and so singing, so answering, the unearthly antiphon went on. On the fleeting river of the hours its music fell like the lapse of rain-drops on a stream; it bore them away into the silence and

darkness; and still the melodious sobbings and chucklings, those unrecordable turns and trills, kept dropping into the night, as though all the kisses of happy dead lovers since the world began were falling back into the world in song.

A small, awed voice spoke into Richard's ear. "Ah, how beautiful! They call one to another!" He could not see her; the witchery of the moment held him even from words; but his lips sought hers, and clung to them while the rapturous birds fluted their endless song.

Once in the night she whispered in his ear: "Why, oh, why do you love me so much?" And when his lips sought her cheek to answer her with a kiss, he found it wet with tears.

"O little Toni," he whispered, passionately, "my love, my dear sweet one, why do you cry? We love each other, we love each other, we are happy!"

"What?" questioned the tremulous voice. "Happy, my dear? Oh, happy is not for me! Only a little while to forget, my dear, dear boy; only a little while to forget, while your love is so good to me!"

And together they forgot. To Richard at any rate there was all the world, earth and heaven, now and hereafter, in the sweet responding woman whose heart beat against his. So sweet she looked in the faint beams of the night light! So fair

and young and tender the face that blushed under his kisses, so pure the perfect breast of snow that rose and fell so gently when she slept in his arms!

A little while to forget: perhaps Toni said the last word on passionate love in that cry of a mis-used heart. A little while to lose oneself, a little while to steep the soul in forgetfulness of itself, and to drown it in the sea of kindness that ebbs and flows between two hearts. A little while, at any rate, of the best we can know or imagine; a little while, before we drink of the dark river, and forget once and for all. Pure, happy women, be a little kind to her in your hearts.

VII

IN a private room of a small restaurant in the Rue d'Antin a party of six were seated at dinner. The four ladies were dressed with an elaborateness evidently designed for more public scenes; but they carried their gaiety with them wherever they went, and the little room resounded with chatter and laughter. A dominating voice rose above the commotion.

“Here, garsong! Vennay! Apportay moi some more of that keska-say-ka-sah! That twirly stuff with the sauce. I'm a divvle at French! Com-prenay? What? Oh, you go home to mother. Here, John, tell him what I want, there's a good boy. My visit to the seaside's given me an appetite, or else it's the state bedroom. I say, girls, what'll the others say when I tell them I've been lying in state, eh? Keska-say-ka-sah?”

Matilda, returned from pastoral scenes, and somewhat rejuvenated by the ministrations of her hair-dresser in the afternoon, was presiding over what was intended to be a farewell gathering of the Barbizon party. Although they had only been there for twenty-four hours, the visit had gone off

with such *éclat* that it had already been rubricated in the calendar of their lives, and had made old friends of them all. They had come back together after an early lunch, and Richard and Lauder had then left their three guests at their hotel for purposes of repose and decoration while they themselves went off to the Tuileries gardens, to sit among the chirping sparrows, and talk. Since they had met the train at Melun the day before, they had hardly been alone together for a moment; yet so much seemed to have happened that they eyed each other a little doubtfully — perhaps for the first time in their acquaintance. The spell was broken by Lauder taking a sovereign out of his pocket and handing it solemnly to Richard. They looked at one another and laughed.

“This is all very well, Richard,” said Lauder, “but it can’t go on indefinitely. I must protest. I can well believe that you intend to saddle yourself with Toni for the rest of your life, and I’m quite willing to be agreeable to Elsa for as long as you please; but I will not carry Matilda about with me!”

“You impose upon me no longer, Lauder. You are full of wise counsels, I admit, but it is you all the time who keep things going. Who suggested Barbizon? Who said, ‘Why not ask them down?’ Who offered Matilda the hospitality of the whole village? And who suggested a dinner-party to-night? As for Matilda, I think her won-

derful and inimitable. What would our party have been without her?"

"Perhaps you are right; we are certainly lucky in our friends. Isn't it odd that we should have found three such exceptions, who nevertheless make up among them everything that is representative of their life? They are none of them French, and don't even live in France; yet one has to come to France to meet them. It is extraordinarily interesting, and since we are interested for the moment in this particular world, I'm glad we met them. But—"

"Well, but what?"

"Well, take care; that's all. You're young, and learning is a delightful pastime; but the things one learns in youth are apt to go to one's heart."

"And the things one learns in age go to one's head, I suppose?"

"Very well; I'm always delighted to laugh. And *à propos* of your studies, let us pursue them by all means to-night; and I think, if we mean to do this thing artistically, we'll go back to London as we intended to-morrow morning?"

"I dare say we shall have had enough by then," said Richard; "anyhow we can see when the time comes." And in the rest of their talk, which was concerned with that retrospective analysis which forms part of any pleasure shared by those who are really friends, there was much discussion of Matilda, and of Elsa, and of the party as a whole;

but Toni was not very often mentioned. Richard was so full of her that, whatever the subject, his talk was really of her; but when he spoke of her directly he was not natural, and affected a critical detachment of mind which was highly illuminating to his friend. Lauder was far too much a man of the world to feel either responsibility or anxiety as to the actions of other people; and he was more interested than worried by Richard's headlong plunge into what, with a nature so thorough as his, might cause a serious disturbance and schism of his life. On the other hand, he knew the quality of his friend's character, and that nothing from without could ultimately do him any real damage. But as they separated and he went to his room to dress, he felt, almost for the first time in his life, a little old; and the thought that he was beyond, or had outgrown, anything under the sun, seized him with a momentary panic.

“ . . . And I tell you, my dear, I enjoy it — oh, ever so much! If only I had had some things with me, we could have stayed a little longer — you and I alone, my dear. What? Listen; we could have sent the others away, and we should have gone off into the forest and listened to the birds — all alone, you and I, my dear; and then we should have come back, and had dinner in the garden — all alone, you and I! And — whisper

. . . oh, how naughty we should have been, and how happy!"

They were sitting hand in hand at one end of the table, a little drawn apart from the others, the cigarette smoke wreathing about them, the white cloth bare but for the coffee-cups and flasks of liqueur. For her two days of plain dress Toni had this evening indemnified herself by a toilet of perfect daintiness and butterfly unreality. To Richard, intoxicated by her presence and her touch, she appeared in an indefinite cloud of the palest, flimsiest cobweb gray. Dusted with diamond star points, warmed by the lustre of her burnished skin, and crowned by the low sweep of tawny hair between forehead and drooping hat, she was as lovely as a flower whose petals the sea-wind tosses, and whose lithe stem yields to and springs back from his salt strength. For Richard she had the added and transcendent charm of a loved woman possessed; her beauty had golden memories as well as promises for him.

Lauder from his end of the table—where he sat enveloped in the conversation of Matilda and Elsa, and of another girl whom, with characteristic thoughtlessness and kindness they had brought with them "because she was staying with us in the hotel, and we didn't like to leave her alone"—glanced now and then at Richard and Toni through the veil of cigarette smoke. Richard was perfectly absorbed. His rather sallow face, with

its strong lean jaw and dark glowing eyes, made a perfect contrast to Toni's vital, vibrating charm; there was even something proper and inevitable in the conjunction of these two creatures, both so young at heart, so full of curiosity about each other, and yet both presumably old enough to accept their pleasure in each other on its true terms. But Lauder had not much time or attention to spare for them. He was kept busy by the strident and yet somewhat tolerable vulgarities of Matilda; and he was absorbed by a change that had come over Elsa, who seemed to have put on with her elaborate gown and jewelry a nature different from the directness and simple-heartedness she had shown to him at Barbizon. There was a note of recklessness and exaggeration in her gaiety which did not suit well with her kind, tender eyes. She surrounded Lauder with a hundred gracious attentions; built up around him a little fabric of kindness, and then knocked it to pieces by some random or reckless expression. Upon Matilda, whose mind still dwelt in state chambers, uttering some appreciation of Barbizon, she broke in:

"Oh, Barbizon is all very well, but it's a little too dull for me. One gets enough dismal and quiet days in London, Heaven knows! The Café de Paris, or the Rat Mort — that's what I like; lots of fun and music and lights and excitement!"

"You didn't seem to miss them yesterday," said Lauder.

“Well, of course not, you silly; I was very happy. But after all, this is the real thing, isn't it?” — and she looked at him with a flashing smile that puzzled even the astute Lauder. All he knew was that she was a woman tormented by all her circumstances; and yet when he saw how patiently and with how little apparent discomfort she listened to Matilda's gross nonsense, and how calmly she heard the interminable bubbling prattle of Toni, he marvelled not a little that she should be capable of so much acquiescence.

The sixth member of the party was one Marie, a French girl, a regular frequenter of the smart cafés, a stereotyped edition of the Parisian cocotte. She spoke English, in deference to the company, and spoke it very ill; her chief topic of conversation being her “mudder,” whom she had either seen the day before, or was going to see the next day — no one could make out which. Dull, phlegmatic, animal, she was in her hours of ease a far from interesting person; yet she too had a social merit most surprising to the ordinary expectation — the merit of self-effacement, of a modest gratitude at being entertained where she had so little claim, and was so obviously an outsider. She ate and drank everything that was given her; smiled benignly on every one; and, except when regaling the company with anecdotes of her “mudder,” kept an amiable silence.

But beneath the social veneer of this odd dinner-

party lay the savage grain of the half-world. In a pause of the conversation at his own end of the table, Lauder turned to Richard and Toni, and found that they were evidently talking of him. Toni smiled and nodded her little head at him till the flowers in her hat danced.

"I like you, John, my dear," she said; "we both say we like you very much. Only this silly boy say I must not like you too much. I think I give him a lesson: come here and give me a kiss."

They all three laughed; but Elsa, with an upward jerk of her chin, said to Lauder:

"If you kiss her I'll walk right out of the room."

"Oh, nonsense," said Lauder, sharply. He resented the threat, and its tone; it was, he felt, unseemly; it was not in the spirit of the evening; it put too serious a color on the butterfly hues of their friendship. "Why, my dear Toni, that's very nice of you," he said, turning to her laughingly; "I think you owe me something, you know; you hardly speak a word to me." She got up, leaned over him, and kissed him on the cheek, still laughing. In a flash Elsa got up, took her opera-cloak from the chair where it was lying, and rustled out of the room. Richard looked after her, puzzled; Lauder did not move; Toni burst into a merry peal of laughter.

"Silly!" she said; "she's only in fun."

But the watchful Matilda, anxious above all things for peace and conviviality, was of another mind.

"You don't know her," she said to Lauder; "she's always up to some nonsense. Live and let live, I say. Of course you did it in fun, but what's the good of spoiling your dinner because of a kiss? I don't go about kissing every one, do I? And yet I'm as fond of it as any one," added the dame, ruefully. "You go after her and make it up."

"Oh, dear, no," said Lauder; "I never do that. If she wants to come back she'll come; if not, I'd rather she would go where she wants to go."

Marie, who was Elsa's friend, got up and said: "I go for her, I bring her back."

"Oh, don't be silly," said Toni; "she'll come back herself. Why is she such a fool as to go, my dear? Leave her alone!"

Marie turned upon her a face of sudden animosity. "If it had been me," she said, "I would not haf gone, I would have scratch your face! I go for her!"

Toni smiled, eying Marie, however, with no friendly regard. "They are all fools," she said, turning to Richard, who was beginning to feel wretched at the prospect of a row. "My dear, I always do vhat I like; if other peoples not like it they — vhat you say? — lump it!" And he felt that what she said was true. There was about

her a magnificent, spoilt impudence that did not fear to offend or mortify any one. She went to a piano that was in a corner of the room, and began to play and sing a little song, in the midst of which Marie returned with Elsa, who walked up to Lauder, made a feint of boxing his ears, and sat down again as if the whole thing had been a joke which was finished. And she joined in the applause when Toni had finished her song. The whole incident, which was forgotten at once by those chiefly concerned, made a lasting impression on Richard, giving him a sense of discomfort and even of insecurity in his new-found happiness. To be plunged thus suddenly out of friendship and conviviality into strife and discord, and the moment after to see complete harmony restored, was to realize how unstable are the foundations of the anti-social life — how incoherent its elements, how apt for disintegration. He remembered the scene of the overturned table in the Rat Mort, and the scissors in the Bal Tabarin; and he seemed to see the whole of this world of pleasure minuetting upon a treacherous floor of false polish and pretence. The sea of life upon which civilization keeps afloat in the iron and oak of its conventions is here frozen thinly over for the dance on its surface; a pause in the dance, a too intimate congregation of the dancers, too much weight on the flimsy surface, and, crack! down you go for a souse in

cold realities, with no social craft to save. To keep skating, thought Richard, is the only chance — a thing pleasant enough as a pastime, and before it has become a life sentence.

The dinner was a great success, however; every one admitted that; and as the ladies knew nothing of Paris except a few milliners' shops and raffish cafés, it was decided to show them a little of Montmartre. The Cabaret des Néants, in particular, appealed to their imagination, and they sallied out in high expectation. It was a lovely, warm night, and Lauder proposed that they should walk. As Toni and Elsa, the autocrats of the party, both agreed, the thing was carried in spite of Matilda's mild protests; and they set out two by two — Richard and Toni in front, Lauder with Elsa, and Matilda with Marie.

This disposition was unfortunate, for it cut off Matilda from the centre of interest, and gave her time to consider that to be made to walk was an indignity for her. The quartette in front were far too deeply absorbed to think of her, and they crossed the boulevards and took the hill at a fair pace. The result was that when they arrived at the Place Pigalle and waited under the trees, it was a ruffled and distempered dame who greeted them.

"Here, steady on!" she panted, "are we out for a pleasant evening, or are we on a race-course? Because I'm not entered for any more events. Oh,

it's all very well," she continued when they laughingly attempted to soothe her; "but I'm hot, and out of breath, and I've got corns, and all this romantic under-the-moon business doesn't amuse me. Not for Jo! I'm not doing any turtle-dove business," she said, eying Toni and Elsa contemptuously; "and if it amuses you, it doesn't me, that's all. I was just feeling nice and comfortable after dinner, and now I'm all anyhow!"

"Come, Matilda, you mustn't spoil our happy party," said Richard; "we want to show you the corpses. Keska-say-ka-sah?"

"Oh, you go on!" said the dame, a little mollified; "you're daft, you are. Well, come on, then; I suppose we can get a drink at this place of worship?"

They crossed the road and entered the Cabaret des Néants — that sordid little place so well known to travelling Americans and to the natives of Montmartre, but comparatively little known to Englishmen and ordinary Parisians. The place was dimly lit by tapers, and revealed perhaps half a dozen coffins of polished wood supported on trestles, tapers stuck in the lids, a bench on either side for the accommodation of guests. Their entrance was greeted by a dismal intoning on the part of two or three of the half-dozen waiters dressed in the black livery of mutes, who began to chant the *De Profundis*. Out of the lighted street, busy with its evening traffic of pleasure,

into this ghastly and funereal parody was but a step; yet it was enough to shock the whole of the party into a momentary unpleasant silence. They took their places, not without superstitious shudderings, around a vacant coffin, and one of the waiters came to receive their orders. The place was filling up, and as each new arrival was ushered in by the porter, the mutes had to break off their traffic in beer and money to take up the plain chant.

"*Un franc le verre, m'sieu,*" one of them was saying to Lauder; "*six francs cinquante — merci, m'sieu;*" and then, as the door opened, raising his voice to a nasal whine, "*voici-les-morts — De pro-fund-is — Dom-in-e clam — Voici, m'sieu, asseyez-vous là, s'il vous plaît!*" and on again with the counting of change and serving of beer.

Suddenly Elsa jumped up. "I can't stand it," she said; "I'm going out." She had turned rather white; and indeed there was a musty atmosphere about the place that was unpleasantly appropriate. "I'll go with you," said Lauder; "we'll wait on a seat under the trees for the others." Matilda glowered for a moment at this defection; but the interest of her own sensations became too much for her, and she was soon busy listening and looking. When the dismal little room was full, the door was shut and the first part of the entertainment began. The dim light of the tapers on the coffins was obscure enough to assist

the cheap optical illusion by which the pictures were seen to fade and change from life to death. Skulls glimmered from corners of the ceiling; and in one oil-painting on the walls a man and a girl seated together at a supper-table turned, when the lights were manipulated behind them, into grinning skeletons. It was *memento mori* written with a bibulous tremor; and Richard, who had often enough heard of the place, was appalled by the triteness and vulgarity of the spectacle. The waiter-mutes, with their play-acting chant, the coffins and trestles, the whole game played with the properties of an undertaker's shop, and with the sexual undercurrent which is inseparable from any Paris entertainment, was like some nasty sport of vicious and overgrown children. Matilda was quite unimpressed; she kept up a running commentary, more or less pertinent, and more or less within the border-line of Montmartre propriety. Toni sat by Richard's side perfectly quiet, extremely interested, and observing the performance with that merciless, attentive scrutiny which she turned on anything new. It was impossible for Richard to guess whether she was pleased or not; only when they had crowded through the musty narrow passages that led to the vault in the rear of the building, and were at last seated in the damp, ill-smelling, and gloomy cavern, listening to the strain of *Dies Iræ* wheezed out on an old harmonium, she slipped

her hand into his and pressed close to him. She gathered her dainty skirts off the ground, and by the dim light Richard saw her looking up into his face with a dismayed and almost tearful expression in her eyes.

"What is it, little one?" he whispered.

"Oh, my dear, it is so sad, solemn; *br-r-r-r*, it makes me so shudder! And oh, my dear, do you think there are *beetles*?"

She was only half-reassured by his laughing reply; but fortunately her attention was at this moment attracted to the little stage, with its open coffin standing on end, into which the usual young man from the audience was presently induced to mount. There was a day when the ghastly illusion by which the features of the person standing there are seen to melt and dissolve, his body fade and become blurred, and the figure of laughing and dissipated youth slowly turn into a skeleton, was novel enough to strike terror into the breasts of the audience; but every one is familiar with such optical trickery now, and the sight was merely ugly, and not at all disturbing except to the friends of the young man. Then came a series of more illusions, practical jokes played on members of the audience who were foolish enough to go on to the platform, on which, themselves unconsciously seated on a chair and wondering when the joke was going to begin, they appeared to the audience to be undressing, or going through

other evolutions — some of them cruelly indecent. At these last Matilda clapped her hands and laughed until the tears came and endangered her complexion; but Toni was unconsciously taking on Richard's color, and was a little revolted.

“No, my dear,” she said, as they crowded out again through the dark passages, “I do not like it. Things funny I like, and things naughty I like, and things pretty I like, but that — no, my dear, it make me want to hold my nose. Ugly! Oh, how I *hate* ugly things!” But she had been sobered and impressed more than she realized; and she charmed Richard by showing a kind of submissive fondness for him, a desire to touch his hand and keep close to him that was very foreign to her usual impersonal detachment and independence.

They found Lauder and Elsa seated under the trees outside; and as Matilda's good humor was now quite restored the party resumed its friendly and harmonious atmosphere. Marie met a friend outside the Café Cyrano, and disappeared from their ken; the others wandered along through the summer night looking in, now at a café to satisfy some momentary whim of appetite, now at a cabaret crowded with a motley, staring throng of Montmartre sightseers. Thus they visited the Cabarets *de l'Enfer* and *du Ciel*, the heaven and hell of childhood, with their devils and red fire, angels and gold paint, blue heaven or smoking

pit-mouth. Thus they visited the cabaret of Aristide Bruant, and were received upon their entrance with somewhat threadbare witticisms, and listened for a few minutes to the monologue of the perspiring entertainer, who was wearing, with a far from happy grace, the mantle of the witty Aristide. The night, as Richard looked back upon it, was a blurred remembrance of pleasant, desultory strolling through streets where the lamplight shone on the chestnut leaves, of occasional dives into the monkey-house atmosphere of a cabaret, and joyful returning to breathe the balmy night air; of the continual ordering of Bocks which nobody drank, and paying admission fees for sights which nobody looked at; of a thread of laughter upon which were strung brilliant, unremembered witticisms; of a golden atmosphere of youthful happiness, good nature, and the joy of life in which these five appeared as the most wonderful people that had ever lived, who said and did things far more interesting than the rest of the world.

Two hours later Lauder and Elsa, Richard and Toni, were driving homewards. They had all gone for supper to the Rat Mort, where the arrival of some famous cocotte from some German watering-place had provided the evening's sensation of interest for the curious community that frequents the restaurant on the hill. Matilda, however, had

been struck with sudden misgivings lest she should be behaving too respectably, and so damaging her reputation; and she had indulged in so much Kirsch, and had gambolled in the Rat Mort with so much vivacity, that the others had been glad to comply with her wish and leave her there, the centre of an area of explosive laughter. Even in that moment she was not intolerable; as Lauder had once said of her, "she was never the worse for drink, but often the better." Her last word had been, as she balanced herself at the top of the stairs — "Well, so long, boys! Look me up in London. The old address, you know. Buckingham Palace'll always find me. Keska-say-kasah?"

But although they left early, chiefly out of consideration for Lauder, who pleaded his early start for London next day, the atmosphere of the Rat Mort had had its effect upon Toni. She was herself again; she shone and sparkled and rattled with an energetic frivolity that drew many admiring eyes on her. She had not been entirely pleased at leaving the Rat Mort while the noise there was still at its height; and now, as they drew near to the Opera, she made one of her sudden demands.

"Oh," she cried, clapping her hands, "let us go to the Café Américain! It's only three o'clock, my dear; don't let us go home yet! It's so stupid. I tell you what; we all four go to the Américain

— *such* fun, and such clever dancing they have there. Come along," she pouted.

"Why not?" said Elsa to *Lauder*. "It's our last night — what does half an hour matter?" So the driver was redirected, and in a few minutes they were seated in a corner of the *Café Américain*, amid plush and mirrors, looking down the long room and listening to the dance music of the inevitable red-coated band. *Toni* immediately felt hungry, and chose an expensive dish from the menu; a watchful attendant came and offered the men two huge bouquets of flowers, which of course had to be bought — not because any one really wanted them, but because they were expensive. So they sat for a little looking down that strange first-floor room, with its strange, silent couples sitting at the many tables, until a sudden unpleasant sense of its sombreness struck *Richard*. It was the first time that, in any of the many places devoted to folly and dissipation which they had visited, he had been aware of any impression of evil; but here, where there was apparently nothing to suggest it, it came suddenly home to him. A few tables, perhaps a score of people having supper quietly at them; every one very well dressed and very well behaved; the whole flooded with light from well-shaded, scarlet lamps, and music from the scarlet band — what was the matter with it, and whence came its sinister impression? There was the usual entertainment

in the form of dances provided by two Spaniards — very ordinary Spanish dances and very well danced; there was not the smallest suggestion of impropriety in the place that night, from the bland and episcopal assiduity of the head waiter to the last eyelash of the most expensively dressed woman there; and yet, in its very quietness and decorum, in the statuesque, immobile faces of the women, with their oblique, unflinching eyes, their polished hair, their drooping hats and gems dripping fire, there lurked the very essence of evil. Suddenly Richard remembered that it was day in the world outside; that somewhere the birds were waking and beginning to sing, or flying to dip and flutter their plumes in the sky-reflecting water; that somewhere the sun-shadows were lying long on dewy lawns, somewhere the sea-foam was breaking pink and gold in the early shine. And here the close-shut curtains, the crimson light, the white satin and jewelry, the coiling smoke, the shining, sphinxlike eyes, the unending glint and bubble of wine! A man sitting alone at a neighboring table caught Richard's eye, and smiled at him with a silly, hateful smile; and with that detestable greeting there went through his frame a shudder of revolt. He turned to Toni, and suddenly his impression changed, and he saw a meaning in the whole elaborate scene. She was leaning forward with her elbows on the table, her eyes shining and dancing with interest, her

pretty hair, in its loose unstudied coils looping loose over her forehead — eagerness, youth, vitality, beauty in every feature. The room became merely a setting for her, the people there lay figures and dummies; and while his eyes rested on her Richard knew that he wished to be nowhere else. And suddenly she turned and met his gaze; smiled first, and then continued to look at him with a beautiful ardor that set his senses swimming. A mist seemed to veil his eyes; she threw her cigarette down, put her hand in his, and whispered, "Let us go home."

Lauder stood at Elsa's door and held out his hand.

"Good-by, Elsa," he said; "you have been charming to me." He spoke without emotion, and with a polite smile on his rather tired face. She looked haggard and beautiful, and carried off easily the effect of her extravagant dragging landscape gown and picture hat. She looked down now, breathing quickly. Lauder, who dreaded emotion as one fears infection, had overdone his reserve, and brought about the very result he had hoped to avoid.

"Have you nothing more to say?" the girl broke out, suddenly throwing up her head and looking at him from under her long lashes. "I don't think it's very nice of you to leave me like this, after all we've said to one another." She opened

her door. "Come in here," she said with an imperious gesture; and then, as Lauder hesitated — "oh, don't be ridiculous; I won't eat you!"

Lauder flushed a little, pricked by the element of absurdity in his reluctance, and followed her. She shut the door, sank into a chair, and burst into tears.

For once he felt rather helpless, being now in a highly false position; and he did not improve matters by putting out his hand and stroking her cheek in a frigid and paternal attitude. At his touch she sprang out of the chair and stood confronting him with flashing eyes.

"Don't dare to touch me!" she cried, dashing her tears from her eyes. "I hate you! Oh, how I *hate* you, with your damned, cold, heartless face! *You* can have everything you want, you can come and make friends with me, and then go away; you haven't to turn from this to take up a life you loathe and detest. Why did you ever make friends with me? Why did you ever talk to me, and remind me of things I've lost and can never find again? Why didn't you leave me as you found me, or else —" and she stopped and looked at him with a new regard. "I wonder what your friendship is made of," she resumed. "Am I ugly? God, that I should have lived to tell a man that I loved him, and to be driven off as though I were infected! Have you no feelings at all?" Her voice broke again, tears swam in

her eyes, and she held out her arms. "Oh, I don't know what I'm saying!" she cried. "I only know that I'm lonely when you aren't there!"

"Listen," said Lauder, taking her hands in his and looking into her eyes. "Don't misunderstand me. You're worth six of me, and if I could help you I would. You say I've no feelings: my God, do you know what you're saying? But it's my curse that I've got more than feelings, as you have too. Do you think it's been easy for me to seem like a bear, and an ungrateful bear at that? Do you think I haven't — Look here," he broke off: "there's only one thing I could do with you, and that's marry you. If I were ten years younger and a fool I'd do it, and we'd both be miserable. Well, I've just got pluck enough not to marry you — do you understand that? And I haven't got pluck enough to have you on any other terms — do you understand that? And so there's nothing left for you to do but say good-by to a cowardly friend, who's not even enough of a coward!"

But she only smiled through her tears and put her arms around his neck. "Come, coward!" she whispered.

He put his hands over hers where they were clasped on his neck. "No, no, no!" he said with a shaking voice; "you will at least have one friend who thought that much of you."

She broke away from him, and suddenly flung

herself on the bed weeping. He stood irresolute for a moment, and then went to the bed, knelt beside it, and put his arms about her. Her lovely head fell on his shoulder, and he kissed her face and comforted her with whatever words came to him. As her sobs became quieter he sought to disengage his arms, but she clung to him as though he were some rock of refuge which she dare not let go. "Only a little while," she whispered; "let me hold you like this for a little, and then go!" So they remained, their two cheeks wet by her tears, both their bodies shaken by her shuddering sobs. Presently she became quieter. "Now," she said, and sought his lips with hers. She pressed one long kiss on them, and then, quickly disengaging herself, turned on her other side and buried her head in the pillow. He pressed and kissed the hand that hung over the bedside, and went out into the twilight of the landing. Toni's rippling laugh floated up to him from the floor beneath.

He found Richard in the little sitting-room, waiting with a happy face until Toni should summon him.

"Hullo, old chap," said Richard, "you look tired out. Late hours don't agree with you as well as with me."

"If you've got a few minutes to spare," said Lauder, "you might walk around to the hotel

with me. I don't suppose we shall see each other again."

"Are you really going by the 9.45?" said Richard, ignoring Lauder's assumption that he intended to remain. They were once more in the silent streets lit with the pearly light of a summer morning.

"Yes, I must be in London to-morrow evening. How long do you intend to stay?"

"I don't know," said Richard; "a day or two at the outside." He was puzzled by Lauder's silence and reticence, and a little resentful that his own affairs were not referred to. He wanted Lauder to advise him either to go home that morning or to stay; he did not at all like the detachment of Lauder's manner. They walked rapidly to the hotel door, and there Lauder paused and held out his hand.

"You'll let me know when you are coming back? We can meet in town and talk over our reminiscences. I dare say I shall be in Cornwall again later."

"Hang it, Lauder, I hardly seem to have spoken to you for days — we've been so much occupied. I wish you wouldn't hurry away like this. Can't you really stay for a day or two?"

"No, I must be back; you remember, to-morrow was the day we intended to return all along. And I don't know that I particularly want to

stay," he added, smiling. "You know my theory about anti-climaxes!"

"I don't know what I'm going to do without you," said Richard, rather weakly. "There's no time to talk now, but —"

"No, of course there isn't; and, besides, there's nothing really very pressing to talk about, is there, friend Richard? I imagine that you will find no difficulty in amusing yourself for a few days. And now I won't keep you. Give my love to Toni when she wakes up, and tell her that she will find my farewell on her dressing-table."

"Look here; don't make any mistake about Toni. It's not — well, it's not what you might think it was. It's deadly serious on both sides — perhaps the best thing of its kind I shall ever know; and I can assure you that to devote myself to her seems to me the thing absolutely most worth doing in the world at this moment."

He spoke earnestly, even solemnly. Lauder put his hand on his arm and looked into his face with a friendly smile.

"Of course it's serious — do you think you need tell me that when I see you flying to her arms at five o'clock in the morning? Off you go, and God prosper you. And don't you, on your part, make any mistake about me, dear Richard. From the bottom of my heart I envy you."

They parted there, Lauder turning into his hotel, Richard hurrying back to the Rue de Calais.

His brisk footsteps echoed along the quiet, empty street, until they were lost in its silence and merged in the gathering rumor of life that was sounding in the neighboring thoroughfares. The mellow sunshine came down more golden and warm, flooding unheeded past the rows and rows of closed houses and shuttered windows, where indoor people, prudent and foolish, virtuous and vicious, just and unjust, were asleep. But under the blue summer sky with its cool wisps of fleecy white cloud the whole outdoor world was awake; and everywhere converging on Paris, in creaking cart, behind clattering hoof, in tram-car and railway-train and gliding boat, or stirring the dust with brave footsteps, came in that salt tide of life that streams forever past the sands and shoals of pleasure, and echoes upon the rocky shores of Time. Man was going forth to his work and to his labor.

VIII

IN the days that followed Richard Grey tasted to the full that happiness of the senses which is the free portion of all those who can abandon themselves to a passion without misgiving or reserve. The world slipped away from him, and left him alone with Toni in a glittering and enchanted pavilion of pleasure, where a silent but mighty machinery served and invisible hosts ministered to them, while their ears were filled with the music of flutes and harps. All this golden unreal fabric of joy sprang into being with his love for Toni, which grew with every hour he spent with her, until he wondered, sometimes with a shudder, what was left in the world, or what life consisted of, but her. All the force and concentration of his strong nature was bent upon her, so that even she was swept off her feet and carried along with him in the tide of passion. It was a wonderful time; and something in his heart (or was it his head?) told Richard to enjoy it while he could; that it was of its very nature transient and fleeting; that the abiding things of life were of grayer, sterner, more sombre

fabric, and that no one could weave of this gold and gossamer a garment able to stand the wear and fret of real life. Perhaps he recognized that; perhaps not; at any rate he threw himself with ardor into the cultivation and enjoyment of this new and strange gift of destiny.

How they passed the days, how many days there were of passionate unclouded happiness he could never remember; all he knew was that the hours went to a dance, that he sunned himself in her smile, delighted in and feasted on her beauty, and that every trite and commonplace saying of the poets was brought to pass in him. She on her part, as he swept her out of herself by the sheer strength of his devotion, grew more charming and more happy. The little white bottle was no more touched; she began to look healthier and even more brilliant, and she became less feverish in her pursuit of pleasure. Quieter things, shared with him, interested her; and though every night was as a matter of course spent at one of the smart cafés which are the home or club of such as they, the afternoons were spent much out-of-doors, and in places where something else than vice was thought of. They visited Versailles, and spent a long sunny afternoon wandering in its empty painted chambers, or in the stillness and dignity of its great garden vistas; they visited Chantilly, St. Cloud — all the outdoor expeditions within reach of Paris. Somehow they kept to Paris,

which seemed like a home to them; its great bright façades, its wide thoroughfares and busy, expensive, heartless life seemed not heartless to them, but kind and beneficent. Everything was done as a matter of course, extravagantly; carriages and motor-cars were in commission for them all afternoon and half the night; and Richard soon recognized, and accepted with easy acquiescence, the fact that Toni was never really happy unless money was being spent on her. In the retrospect of these days he seemed to himself to be continually paying for something, to be continually calling *maitres d'hôtel* to bring him bills, and paying them with hundred-franc notes, the change out of which was too inconsiderable to be taken. He even caught from Toni the trick of appraising the desirability of things entirely by their price in money, and of ordering by instinct the most expensive. In four days he was amazed to find that he had spent nearly a hundred pounds — how, he had no idea. After her one expression of pity for what she regarded as his penurious circumstances, Toni had no mercy on him — or rather, it never occurred to her that mercy under the circumstances was a possible idea; gold was as necessary to her existence as air, and must be as easily forthcoming. Richard was not embarrassed by his extravagance, for in his ordinary quiet life he never spent any money at all, and his salary went to swell a quite respectable balance

at the bank; nor had it any wasting or loosening effect upon him, as it might have had on some men. He was much too thorough and comprehensive in his ideas to give the thing a thought, once he had realized that it was expected of him; and though he took no great pleasure himself in his new environment of highly artificial and merely symbolic luxury, it was a point of honor with him to provide it. He was even interested and amused to see how easily money could be spent, and how little there was to show for it.

His absorption in Toni was the crowning delight and very real worth of these golden days. Her strange, obscure, wonderfully fashioned, and badly flawed personality, so storm-tossed on the frothy waves of pleasure, seemed for the time to have come to an anchor in the calm shelter of Richard's love, like some pretty, rakish pirate ship that, after long and adventurous voyages on the high seas, engagements with rich merchantmen, capturing of dyes and silks and treasure, and trafficking with spice islands, now careens in the sunny quiet of some landlocked harbor. She opened to him like a flower, and disclosed strange treasures of brain and character, that made him love her the more, and filled him at the same time with a kind of passionate pity. Just as her exquisite beauty was flawed by the mouth of vampire redness and cruelty, so everything in her, every thought, impulse, desire, and passion she had,

seemed to be flawed also. She was like some fragile casket of gems, shocked or jarred by a seismic disturbance, of which the rare contents are found when it is opened to have suffered a similar jar or damage from the shock. At first Richard was hardly conscious of the flaws—he was too much taken up with the discovery of the treasures themselves. Her quickness of mind, her absolute cleverness, were almost uncanny; for some things, for basenesses, doubtful motives, anything that threatened herself or anything belonging to her, her perception was of a like quickness, precise and unfailing; but for more noble qualities she had no instinct. Nevertheless she belonged essentially to that intellectual minority that exists like a scattered brotherhood throughout the world; she was one of those who understand; “she belongs,” as Richard had said to Lauder after his first long talk with her. The wittiest and profoundest man in the world would have found her a delightful and fascinating companion; the most cruel would, in some of her moods, have recoiled from her terrible heartlessness and ravening selfishness. Yet she was not without a heart to love and be loved, and in her moments of melting she was the more adorable for her former coldness and detachment. When she was cold she was unapproachable; when she was kind she was irresistible, and she whirled Richard continually between the frigid pole of abstinence and the very

equator of passion. When they came home together she would sometimes torment him by coldness and aloofness, telling him that she was tired and must be left alone, and so dismiss him; only to come into his room half an hour afterward and yield herself to him with the sweetest generosity and kindness. She was never immodest, where modesty is a virtue; in circumstances where it can be dispensed with she knew how to substitute for it an abandonment so charming that her lover had no difficulty in reconciling himself to the change. In a word, she had the art of love at her finger-tips, and knew when not to practise it. No wonder if Richard went into bondage to her fascinating, changing personality; no wonder if, like so many conquerors, he fell into slavery to that which he had captured. But so long as she was pleased and happy there was no shadow on his love.

The first symptom of a change came one day when, having almost exhausted his ideas of entertainment for her, Richard thought of taking her to dine at the Tour d'Argent, and getting Frédéric to improvise a dish for her. Anything famous, or that was the right thing to do, always appealed to her; and as they were going to a performance of "Tannhäuser" (which Toni had never heard) at the Opera afterward, they set out early to drive

along the riverside to the little café near Notre Dame.

"This is nice," she said, as they drove along the Quai Voltaire. "I have not been here before. What are all those little boats doing? What? Oh, I love to go in a boat, Richard, my dear; let us get a boat and sail on the river, what? Not for sail. Well, then, we go somewhere to-morrow where we sail. Oh, how hungry I am! Do I look nice? What, you like my frock? Good boy, you are beginning to learn something. You teach me many things; I teach you somesings too; I teach you not to admire cheap frocks or bad style — What? I make you laugh at your English ladies with all their lace and colors and bad finish to everysings."

"Why, you vain little peacock, you think nobody knows how to look nice but yourself!"

"You are nearer right than you think, my dear. You say exactly the right word. Lots of womens is nice; lots of womens can look nice; not so many know *how* to look nice! But where are we going? This is a — what you say? — low neighborhood, slum, shabby. I thought this café was a famous place, what?"

"Yes, so it is; all the Americans go there; they —"

"Oh, my dear," broke in Toni, going off at a tangent; "I tell you somesings so funny. The Americans — how they make me laugh. An

American I meet once at Biarritz, he say to me, 'Toni,' he say, 'I give —'

"Toni!"

"Vhat?"

"Don't talk of such things; you promised not to. I hate to be reminded of them."

"Silly boy! You are, vhat you say? — sentimental. Poor boy!" she continued with diabolical intention, "he like to pretend he is the only person Toni has ever spoken to. And all the time — oh, you make me laugh!" And she did laugh, her clear, ringing, rather heartless laugh.

Richard's brow darkened. "Hang it, Toni, there are decencies, anyhow. You might have the grace not to mention the others to me. One would think you were proud of them."

He spoke with the intention of making her ashamed, forgetting, for the moment, the perfect justice of her views on such matters.

"Proud? I don't understand, my dear. Why should I be proud, or not proud? It has nothing to do with proud. It is my business, my dear, as you very well know. That is my business, and you are, well, you are my — vhat? — my playtime! No one is proud of his business, but I" — she slipped her hand into his and looked sideways at him with a conciliating smile — "I am, *oh*, so proud of my playtime. I love my playtime!"

"Toni, dearest, don't say it's only play. Tell

me it's earnest, dead earnest; tell me you love me in earnest."

"Silly boy! I tell you no such nonsense. You speak too seriously, when you ought to speak — how you say? on surface. The surface is a good place for talking before dinner, my dear; some other time I go underneath and — show you instead of tell you. What?"

The cloud passed, but Toni returned to the subject of their riverside drive, of which she ceased to approve. As they approached Notre Dame the picturesqueness of the neighborhood lost its charm for her, and she began to criticize it from the point of view of fashion.

"Look here, my dear, I tell you, no chic people will come here. What? I don't believe it, my dear. Look, there are no carriages, no anything. Don't let us go here; let us turn and go to Café de Paris!"

"No, of course not: when we've come all this way I'm not going to let you turn back and miss it. Why, don't you want to say you've had a special dish invented and called after you by one of the most famous chefs in Paris?"

"All right, my dear," said Toni, somewhat mollified but looking ruefully at her delicate pink gown; "but I am quite, quite sure it is not a smart place — truly!"

They went through the little outer hall into a small square room where so many wonderful

dishes have been eaten. It was certainly a shabby place compared with the gilded luxury of the fashionable cafés. An uncarpeted floor, and absence of flowers and decoration, a rather greasy air of gluttony, a sprinkling of unfashionably dressed French and American diners, with the great Frédéric himself, living up to his reputation of looking like Ibsen, busy over his hot table and presses, aided by two untidy and perspiring waiters. There was a general air of heat and untidiness in the room, and Toni looked unhappy, and held her dainty garments well off the floor as she tripped across to the table that had been reserved for them. They were the only people in evening dress — a fact which seemed to shock her; and they attracted some little notice from the silent, gormandizing groups at the tables around the walls. But the flattering attentions of the great impressionist chef made a diversion; and when the “sole Toni” arrived in its wonderful culinary toilet she was enchanted, and forgot the dingy surroundings. The interest, moreover, of seeing Frédéric making innumerable dishes of *caneton à la presse* was so prolonged that it furnished entertainment throughout the rest of the meal. The deft way in which, as one duck after another was brought to him all brown and hissing, he laid his knife under the flesh and with a few masterly strokes removed all the meat; the crushing of the carcass beneath the hand-press, and the spout

of blood and essence or juice of duck from the little tap; the making of this juice into a wonderful sauce that kept simmering and bubbling over the spirit-lamps, and was gradually ladled over the whole savory dish — these were fascinating sights, and absorbed the attention of every one in the room. The greedy feasters kept their eyes fastened on Frédéric, and became intoxicated by the sight of the succession of ducks coming hot from the kitchen; and as each party was served, the one next in order sighed and licked its lips, and wondered whether its duck would be just such another juicy one as that which was now swum, in sauce of its own substance and providing, down the throats of the fortunate ones.

They had been sitting some time in silence regarding this drama of the stomach when Richard noticed that Toni's eyes were fixed in a gloomy and unfamiliar expression.

"Anything the matter, little girl?" he asked her, at the same time putting out his hand to hers under the table. She drew her hand away from his touch, and continued to look darkly away, without speaking.

"Toni, dear, what is it?" he asked again. "Has anything gone wrong?"

She turned her eyes slowly upon him; and in them now there shone an angry light.

"I tell you, I am offended, very much offended, that you bring me to this place. It may be all

you say, but why are there no smart people here? Look at these low people! I believe it is a common eating-house! I like not such places!"

He was at first too much surprised to say anything; afterward he was too much revolted and offended by her base suspicion that he had taken her to a cheap place and pretended it was distinguished to try to explain. They sat looking at each other, these two, across a chasm that had suddenly opened between them. Toni had lost her hold on Richard's comradeship and congeniality; she merely saw herself as one who had been inveigled out of her proper environment, an alien in a strange country which she did not know, and in which her professional language was not spoken; and a sense of antagonism, which had only been dormant under the fascination of Richard's personality, woke up in her now. Every fibre of her being resisted and rebelled against the set of ideas that brought her to such a place; she felt a nostalgia for the scenes of glitter and gaiety to which she belonged, for the sight of her own kind, and the sound of their voices; she hated the superiority, the arrogance, whether of intellect or taste, that in a place like this set itself up against the dominion of mere money and vicious convention; and she felt that she almost hated Richard, as the representative of it. He for his part was mortified by her gross discontent, and thoroughly shocked by her revolt. He had

deliberately shut his eyes to her tastes and proclivities, and he resented her forcing them open to see her as she was. Of course he had set up an image of her in his mind to worship, and of course he hated the reality which was suddenly substituted for it. Silently he called for the bill (which was not entirely despicable in its amount) and put Toni into the waiting carriage.

In that blank and paralyzed silence which follows an apparition of reality to people living in illusion they drove along the lighted *quais* to the Opera. Once Richard stole a side look at Toni. She was sitting up very straight beside him, defiance in the poise of her head and in the cold, alert shining of her eyes. Her brow was slightly knitted, and he wondered, with a kind of bitter longing, what was going on in that mysterious mind of hers; and when he saw how hard she looked, and how capable of resolve, he fell into a kind of panic for his happiness. To chase that terrible, cold, merciless look from her face became an absolute necessity for him; yet he found nothing to say, and realized that of all the thoughts which were surging in his brain not one could be communicated to the woman at his side. She would not understand; for when a woman who has melted to us freezes again, there seems to be no fire or steel in us able to penetrate her veil of coldness.

They were a little late at the Opera, and took

their seats just as the curtain was rising on the Venusberg and on that moment when Tannhäuser awakens and begins to look about him — an eternal situation. Both sensitive to the power of music and drama, the beauty of this music-drama gripped and held them both from the very beginning. Gradually Richard forgot his troubles, and was absorbed in the struggle between the charms of Venus and Tannhäuser's growing discontent. Toni was absorbed too — partly by the essential interest of the drama, partly by a semi-professional interest in Venus and her berg, not unmingled with contempt for an affair so lamentably mishandled by the lady. But as the music flowed on, and one maze of dances followed another, and as the scene began to work up to its climax, Richard and Toni began to enjoy it too much to remain at enmity; as their unexpressed sense of companionship in enjoyment grew, their sense of animosity died away; and when at the name of Mary the whole Venusberg vanished in a clap and the spring meadows appeared in its place, Toni turned and put her hand in Richard's, looked at him with shining eyes, and whispered, "My dear, how beautiful!" He thrilled to her touch, and forgave her in one look of tenderness, and together they watched the mists rising from the valley, and that exquisite early morning scene, fresh and sweet and fragrant after the nightmare of the Venusberg, unfolding itself

to quiet music that is like a dream of dew and spring flowers.

Thereafter the atmosphere was bright and sunny again, as though that mock convulsion of the stage had indeed broken up and chased away the clouds that had darkened their happiness. Toni's hand rested in Richard's, both of them happy with a new happiness that was partly the enjoyment of music and drama, and partly a sense of relief and healing at the safe passing of the cloud that had threatened them. Together in mind and spirit, more than they had ever been since their first meeting, they watched the play unrolling itself like a painted banner; together thrilled at the swelling song of the pilgrims as they passed bowing before the Virgin's shrine; together watched Tannhäuser set forth happily on his journey. Between the acts their tongues were loosened, and Richard was delighted to find Toni's curious searching intelligence bent in criticism of a thing of the mind. She had her views about Tannhäuser. "I have seen, oh, so many like him, Richard, my dear! He is a nice boy, but no good. He doesn't know what he wants; now he want Venus, and when he is with Venus, he want, oh, he long for that beautiful Elisabeth with the golden hair! And when he has Elisabeth he thinks he is, oh, so happy; but all the time he think of Venus, and want to go back to her." Later she said: "They all sing too much. Venus,

she sings, and is so busy with her top note that she does not see how — what you say? — bored Tannhäuser is, and she loses him. Then Tannhäuser sings instead of going home and marrying that pretty girl, and the other people come when he is singing. Then they all sing, and Tannhäuser gets so bored he sings something naughty and shocks them; and then the pilgrims sing, and he goes off with them — anywhere, my dear, to get away from that pretty Elisabeth and her aunts and uncles! Then his uncle — what you say? that old man with the beard and harp — *he* could have put things right; but instead all the time he sings, and poor Elisabeth catches cold listening to him. And when Tannhäuser does come back, and they ought to have put him to bed, they let him sing until he dies. All dead of singing, my dear!”

They were very happy, and in that softened frame of mind, the pretty delusion of lovers, in which all that they see and hear is applied to themselves. It was they who were separated, in sorrow and penitence, amid the littered splendors of the Hall of Song from which Tannhäuser's indiscretions had banished the scandalized court; it was their love that touched the sad autumn wayside, with its shrine and evening light, with a memorable glory; it was for them that Wolfram, mock-harp, tow-beard, paraphernalia of German romantic pseudo-medieval costume and all, sang

to the evening star, and Elisabeth scanned with anxious, tearful eyes the wayworn company of returning pilgrims.

They are fortunate who first know a great work of art when they are under the empire of an emotion — no matter what. Some such preparation is necessary to weld together and stamp with truth what long ago was the heavy labor of him who created it; just as the glow and ebullition of their own lives made for these two a great and moving thing of what Richard Wagner long ago in Paris, poor and struggling, and distracted by a thousand anxieties, toiled at with pen and keyboard and brain. The great theatre was for them filled with a golden atmosphere through which the beautiful illusion shone upon them kindly.

The quarrel was not referred to in words. They had supper quietly at Voisin's, and went home early, but Toni's eyes shone kindly on Richard, and she gave him one of her rare expressions of herself. He was sitting in a chair, and she was standing and looking down on him with her hands on his shoulders. Something in his face, the appeal of the love that she saw there, perhaps awed even her armored heart.

"Oh, my dear, why do you love me so much? You make me say what I am ashamed of."

"What is it, dear one?" he whispered.

"Richard, I tell you that I love you — oh, more than a little!"

He folded her in his arms and they forgot the terrible cloud of antagonism that had hovered over them. Foolish hearts! Like careless travelers who escape from the threatening storm-cloud and walk on under a starry sky, they forgot that it is not only what lies before us that is to be feared, but what lies behind, in seed-furrow, perhaps to come to its deadly harvest, or in that same calm sky in which no clouds threaten, but which holds and renders again whatever it has drawn to itself.

IX

IN the sleep of the intelligence and the wakeful pleasures of the senses that were his life with Toni Richard became conscious of a change. At first it was only when he was with her that he was perfectly happy; away from her he was conscious of a criticism, too slight to be called a revolt, that seemed to examine with doubt the worth of his happiness. But as day after day glided past in the now familiar round of luxurious pleasures this disposition was reversed. The antagonism that had shown itself at the Tour d'Argent, and which they had suppressed so successfully at the Opera, showed itself again and repeatedly, and each time with more assurance, as a more definite thing and one less easily to be smothered. The effect of it was that there were continual differences of opinion between the two, at first upon little things, and afterward upon any matter admitting of opinion that cropped up; so that the hours they spent together began to be darkened by little bitternesses, silences, woundings of one another's feelings, and all the miserable fruits of dissension. Yet when he had left her Richard

would be filled with remorse, take himself to task for his lack of patience, his selfishness even. Had not he everything he wanted in the world? And was not her life, whatever the luxury of its externals, hard and unpleasant enough without his marring this season of holiday that had come into it? Thus when he was away from her he saw her only as some one to be loved and cherished with every tenderness and patience; he saw her virtues, her warm living personality, and forgot the black pit of selfishness that lay beneath; and he longed to return to her, so that he might show her how much he loved her. Yet as soon as they were together the same root of bitterness would spring up. Each was trying, unconsciously, to mould the real into the likeness of the ideal; each was striving to graft upon what of the other was apprehended and loved a finished creature of his or her own sort. Richard loved Toni for her gaiety, her charm, her beauty of form and proportion, her intelligence; and these he tried to take and enjoy and to ignore the rest of her, which was just as real and as much alive, although it did not minister to his happiness. She loved the courage and enterprise, the manly wholeheartedness of Richard; what he wanted, she thought, was a little more gaiety and a little less reserve. On her stock of adventuress and cocotte he would have grafted, if he could, all the domestic virtues, a nunlike fastidiousness, and God knows

what of emotional and intellectual paradox; of him, still retaining his subtle simplicity and his firm hold on life, she would have made a man-about-town, raffish and prone to occasional alcoholic excess. And as each pulled the harder in one direction, the other resisted the more firmly, and began to pull the opposite way; so that the cord of affection that bound them became stretched very tight, and in danger of breaking under the strain.

In all intimacy there is education, and we cannot love without learning. It is hard to say which of these two learned the more from their union — Richard who sought, or Toni, who resisted, its lessons. In all her life hitherto of adventure and social privateering she had been treated as a beautiful, costly toy, a thing of price, indeed, but of no value; and she had learned to keep herself and her heart hidden and to use counterfeits, just as she kept her pearls and diamonds at the bank and wore paste imitations of them. Pearls and diamonds, however, do not corrupt nor waste away; though in darkness the pearls may grow dim, use will soon restore their lustre again. But the soul is perishable and dies of neglect — a poor thing, when we take it out of its dark wrappings and let the unwonted daylight shine on it! Toni found it hard work to be herself, or rather to be the self she might once have been, and the effort was only possible to her so long as

she found it necessary to her happiness with Richard. She had played so many parts in her short life that she was quite accomplished enough to take the rôle of herself; the only point was, did she want to? She soon found that she did not; that after so long an experience of posturing, it was fatiguing to be natural, and, worse still, it was dull. The profound suspicion of everything and everybody which is characteristic of the cocotte turns to a swift antagonism when the suspicion seems to have been justified; and Toni soon became aware of Richard's persistent pull on her. It was instinctive on his part; unconsciously he dragged her from her anchorage on the shoals of pleasure, and tried to moor her out in his own philosophic deeps. But poor Toni had not cable enough to hold her there, or she was not constructed to ride easily in these waters; as a seaman might say, she was "not bluff enough in the bows, she had too much run aft;" and she had shipped several seas of discomfort and displeasure before she slipped her moorings and drifted in again to better holding-ground. When they spoke of conduct, for example, Richard was often charmed by the justice and clearness of her views; but let her pursue the subject long enough, and she would reveal a perfect heartlessness and cruelty. Once they were speaking of her maid, an elderly German woman, who had been Toni's nurse, and who had followed and served her faith-

fully through all her changing life. Richard was quite fond of her, and heard with surprise that Toni intended to send her away.

"What," he said, "send her away after all these years? What on earth for?"

"Oh, my dear, she becomes too much a good thing. She stay too long with me already, I think; she begins to command me. What you think? She say to-day, 'Madame, I cannot allow that you wear that pink silk dress again, so I have put it away!' I tell you I was *angry*, oh, my dear, I never was so angry in all my life!"

"Well, but you don't get an honest woman like that every day. Besides, think of all the years she has looked after you, dear. I should hate to think of you going about without old Anna to look after you. You know she adores you, and would die for you."

"Rubbish, my dear. I get lots of people to adore me for thirty pounds a year. When any one is with you for so many years it is time to send them away. You get fond of them, or they grow ill, and then you have to keep them. No, my dear, Anna has just gone a *little* too far with me; I send her away, and get a smart French maid in her place. I tell you they know something, those girls!"

The combination of worldly wisdom and utter heartlessness of this decision was significant of her whole attitude; and the tears of her old serv-

ant, at which she laughed contemptuously, availed nothing. It was no business of Richard's, but he could not help a rather sharp remonstrance with her for what he regarded as flagrant ingratitude.

"Gratitude, my dear? you make me laugh. What is this always that you say of duty and gratitude? I do not know them, my dear; I ask not gratitude from any one, and I ask not what you call kindness; and duties — I do not know them. They are for servants."

Before a front of such callous assurance, what could he do but abandon remonstrances founded on a set of ideas which she was incapable of understanding? So he gave ground, or seemed to give it; but in the secret ledger account which we all keep with our friends, and in which we unconsciously enter every incident of human relationship, Richard posted such capitulations to Toni's debit. True love, we are told, keeps no such reckoning; but it is probably more just to say that while love exists they are never cast up, and the balance is never struck. But the items lie there, indelibly entered upon the pages of memory; and woe to the lover who adds up the sum of his love and finds it wasted and himself insolvent because of the greater sum of drawings on his happiness!

Toward this unhappy day of reckoning was Richard now hurrying. In the meantime he paid, and paid handsomely. It was he who always gave

in, he who accommodated himself to Toni's whims and fancies, he who made the necessary sacrifices when they disagreed. He made them deliberately and with his eyes wide open. He loved Toni so much that he allowed nothing that he could control to obscure or interfere with his love. When she was exigent or selfish, he remembered how the idea of foregoing anything or of making any concession had never entered her thought or life. When she was unkind, he remembered how unkind the world was ready to be to her the moment she ceased to minister to its pleasures; when she was greedy or impatient, he remembered her hand-to-mouth existence, that she was laying up no treasures of happiness for herself, nor any cumulative result in life, and that to snatch at what she could get while she could get it represented the only possible wisdom of her existence. Thus he excused her, and applied the varnish of his love to the cracks and flaws in her character, so that if they could not be mended they should at least be hidden from him. And as he thus became less selfish, and as he continually asked less and gave more, his love for her broadened and deepened, seeming to grow but the stronger, as love will, on a discipline of fasting and sacrifice.

The last time he saw her at her best, when she was the Toni of the Barbizon holiday, was the afternoon when he took her to the Salon. With

a genuine consideration for him she had dressed very quietly in a black dress and a big black hat with pale roses crushed between the brim and her hair.

“I must not disgrace you,” she said; “no one shall know what I am; only they will turn and say, ‘Oh, look at the Englishman and his pretty wife—no, his French cousin!’”

And certainly more than one admiring glance was cast on the beautiful girl who walked so sedately with him through the crowded galleries. Her playing of the part was perfect, and not in the least overdone; indeed she was almost her natural self in these gay and beautiful surroundings, and Richard had never so much admired or delighted in her. Her eyes were everywhere; on the pictures, on the fashionable Parisian women, on the foreigners, on Richard, to see if he approved of her behavior. She walked slowly about, slim and small, and yet imposing in her rich and sober dress; she took in the pictures with a directness of criticism and intelligence which was in delightful contrast to the dull regard of the ordinary eye-wearied frequenter of exhibitions. What did not interest her she had the art of not looking at, even of not seeing; what she liked she recognized at once, and various indeed were the reasons of her likes and dislikes. The blue-purple landscapes of Raffaele, the Parisian impressionism of Veber, Willette, and Guillaume

(whose pictures seemed unaccountably familiar to her); Caro-Delvaille's portrait of Mme. Edmond Rostand, in which she traced a faint resemblance to herself; Sargent's "Duchess of Sutherland" — these all seized her attention and provoked her criticism, which, if it was more concerned with humanity than with technique, was not the less piquant and interesting for that. But two things that held and mesmerized her were above all the rest. De la Gandara's portrait of Mlle. Polaire caught her eye as she entered the gallery in which it was hung, and she walked straight up to it and stood confronting it. Richard could not help noticing and delighting in the contrast — the exquisitely poised figure of the *danseuse* with her gown of filmy heliotrope, her olive skin and long, passionate eyes, and the fair-skinned, black-gowned, gold-crowned Toni standing motionless before the canvas, her face composed in a profound calm of contemplation, and looking as though she too had walked out of a picture.

But Zuloaga's "Mes Cousines" had an even more arresting effect on her. They were idly sauntering along in front of the pictures when Richard heard something like a little cry, and found her gazing at the Spaniard's dark canvas, her lips parted, her breath coming quickly. The dense and yet luminous color, the dreamlike quality of the landscape in the background, as clear and definite as a thing seen, as unreal as a thing

only remembered, the three tall, dark women with their black shining eyes and bright yet melancholy attire, all the vitality of sunshine in the attitudes that were nevertheless like sudden and alert movement struck into the stillness of death; before this masterly and bizarre creation she stood entranced. Richard spoke to her, but she did not hear him; and, indeed, upon him too the three bold, dark women were throwing their spell. They stood there in silence for a long time; but even when they moved away Toni's eyes remained on the picture as though they were fastened to it. She walked through the galleries in a dream, and presently Richard, who had turned to look at a small water-color, missed her from his side, and saw her disappearing through the door leading to the room in which the Zuloaga was hung. It was though the thing had really hypnotized her. She stood again before it, her eyes travelling again and again over every inch of the canvas, as though she were trying to commit it to memory; and when at last they turned to leave the room she went back once more, as one turns to take farewell of the dead. Her eyes were shining.

"I shall never see it again," she said. "I know I shall not; but oh, my Richard, how I *love* that I have seen it! Once things like that happen, but not twice — never twice."

As they were walking down the staircase, she suddenly stopped and said:

“They are like this — and this — and one like this —” making three postures in rapid succession, in which the individuality of each of the three women in the pictures was wonderfully reproduced. It was done so lightly that it attracted no attention — the people around them merely thought she was speaking to Richard; but with the slightest inclination of the head and oblique direction of the eyes the three poses were perfectly mimicked. Richard tried to get her to do it again, but she would not; in fact, as soon as they were outside the building she seemed to have forgotten about it, and to be interested only in tea.

He had hoped that her quiet, grave charm of the afternoon was a sign of the return of her old self, and of reawakening interest in things of some dignity; but in this he was disappointed. As though the repression of her other self during the afternoon had been too heavy a strain upon her, she went in the evening to the other extreme; chatted incessantly about nothing at all throughout dinner; and that night at the Rat Mort so distinguished herself by her noisy brilliancy as to attract a great deal more attention than Richard liked. She spoke to several men she knew, and even danced the “cake-walk” with one of them in the small hours after the general public had gone and the restaurant was left to the occu-

pation of the kind of informal *demi-mondaine* club which had its headquarters there. Richard was torn between wounded pride, shame, and the basest kind of primitive jealousy; he could not help watching and admiring Toni as she floated about between the ugly parades of the so-called dance; but to see her in the close embrace of another man sickened him. Nevertheless he said not a word of reproach; he was determined to accept the conditions of the world he was in; and he knew that Toni thought nothing of such an act, although some of her more discreet friends were watching Richard to see how he would take it. He gave no sign, however; sat calmly smoking his cigarette, and, when she had finished, smiled and applauded with the rest. And he had his reward in the knowledge that Toni knew perfectly well what he had been feeling, and admired him for his forbearance with what was a purely mischievous caprice; and she made it up to him by a very attractive devotion afterward. Nevertheless Richard had suffered, in spite of his untroubled countenance, hellish tortures of sensual jealousy; and he realized that such scenes could not be repeated with safety to their happiness. He could see that the close companionship, the fact that they were never separated for more than an hour or two, was telling on her nerves; and he resolved, not without misgivings, to try a different plan. When he left her that morning he

told her that he would leave her to herself for the day, as she had some shopping to do, and that he would call for her in the evening and take her to dine at Paillard's, where he promised that she would be among the smartest of smart people.

He felt a little lonely without her, wondered longingly what she was doing, and counted the hours until he could join her again. He spent the afternoon ransacking the shops of collectors on the south side of the river in order to get a present that should be worthy of her beauty and his love. Even in this matter of a present, however, his fundamental opposition to her was revealed. He knew very well that some showy ornament of diamonds or pearls was what would please her best, and yet he rebelled against the thought of diamonds and pearls. She had a good many already, and he did not allow himself to think of where they had come from; at any rate he was determined that his gift should not be made in that glittering but dismal currency. Generous and easy-going in matters of this kind as he was by nature, he was for once less concerned that his gift should be what she liked best than that it should represent his ideas of what he would like her to like; it was not Toni, but the creature of his imagination bearing her name whom he sought to please and adorn. Therefore he searched long and critically, rejecting many beautiful things as

not beautiful enough, until he discovered a wonderful old necklace of paste and uncut emeralds in an intricate cobweb setting of the thinnest silver. It was an exquisite ornament, designed in the days of patient lavishness, and had not improbably been displayed, and perhaps not in vain, for the eye of Napoleon himself. It was worth nearly as much as Richard paid for it, and that was a sum which would have purchased many diamonds and pearls. But this had none of the commonplace glitter of the jewelry of commerce; it could never be mistaken, he thought, for the price of fugitive pleasures; it looked like what it was — a love-gift, designed with art, wrought with skill, sought for and chosen with anxious care. He thought of how it would rest on the fair satin of her neck, and he realized, not without satisfaction, that its beauty was of a kind that must reign alone, and could not be blended with examples of a baser art.

When he called for her at eight o'clock she was not ready, and Richard was surprised to hear from Anna that she had only got up an hour before. Madame had been asleep all day: no, she was not unwell, only she was very tired, and (to judge by the traces of tears on Anna's face) had been more than usually exigent in the matter of dressing. If Herr Richard, as she called him, would sit down in the drawing-room and smoke a cigarette,

madame would not keep him long. Richard sat down and lit the cigarette, wondering what in the world could have kept the restless Toni in bed all day. She had been complaining of all the things she had to do, and all the shops she had to visit; and yet she had not been out of her room all day. A sudden thought flashed in his mind; surely the little white bottle had not been in use again? He thought it unlikely, for she had lately seemed quite free from the nervous indisposition which had driven her to it in the first place; yet the idea was definite enough in his mind to prevent him saying anything about her not having been out. The case containing the necklace was ready in his pocket; but there was not time to give it her now; he did not want to present it in a moment of hurry; and he decided to keep it until later when they would be alone together and he could tell her something of what he wanted it to mean to her.

She came at last, all in a flutter and flurry, and jingle of chains and glitter of jewelry; she was dressed all in white, with a big white hat; and although she looked tired and had, contrary to her usual custom, applied a touch of color to her cheeks, Richard thought she had never looked more bewitching.

"My poor boy," she said, as she kissed him, "I have kept you waiting so long! but, my dear, you haf no idea how tired I was; I never was so tired

in all my life — really. Now we go along to Paillard's and be happy. I am, *oh*, so hungry!" And she gave a long account of how she had meant to get up, but had felt so sleepy that she didn't, and how she had slept until the afternoon, and then had a headache and thought it better not to get up at all until it was time to dress, that lasted until they were seated at a corner table which the polite but anxious-looking Claude had decorated for them with his own hands. The dinner had been very carefully chosen; the *désir de roi* was worthy of the house, and was greatly appreciated by Toni, especially when she heard its name; the Romanée Conti was in perfect condition, and the old Tuileries brandy was worth nearly what it cost — which was just about its weight in gold. Yet the dinner was not a success; it was in fact a failure from the very start; and no amount of make-believe could keep Richard from admitting it to himself. He did his best to amuse Toni, but she would not be amused; she talked very little, was more than usually occupied with her appearance, and when she did listen or speak to her companion, she listened and spoke as one whose thoughts are elsewhere, and who does not even take the trouble to hide the fact. She looked about her a great deal and was interested in the toilets of the other fair diners; but the little room does not hold many people, and she had soon exhausted that interest. The quietness of the

place oppressed her after the noisiness of the cafés she generally frequented; she was less at her ease than usual; and when the dark-eyed *chef d'orchestre* descended from the little alcove, and began to play to her, she so far forgot herself as to smile boldly back at his ogling glances. Richard paid him and sent him away, at which she scolded him with an unpleasant gleam in her eye that made him rather hopeless of the farce he was trying to play through. Matters came to a head when, following the frequent direction of her eyes, he saw that she was looking at an elderly, fat, and extremely repulsive man who was dining with a friend at a near table. He was staring impertinently at her, encouraged no doubt by the interest she seemed to take in him.

“What a hideous old beast,” said Richard. “Don’t look at him, dear; don’t you see he’s staring at you? Damn his eyes!”

“Oh, don’t be so — what you say? — fidgety. Why should he not look at Toni? I tell you, my dear, I think he is in love with me!” She laughed gaily, and began to talk animatedly to Richard about nothing at all, her instinct to be attractive in the eyes of any one whom she thought important enough reasserting itself. He could see that it was all done for the benefit of the stranger, who continued to stare; and jealousy took possession of him — jealousy none the less bitter because the occasion of it was so absurd. He felt it to be

trivial, but he felt it also to be outrageous, and it drove him, in spite of himself, into a mood of sarcasm which he knew Toni resented more than anything.

"Oh, well," he said, "look at him by all means, if you find him attractive; I don't admire your taste, that's all."

"Silly!" she said, "I tell you, my dear, he may not be handsome, but he is smart, chic; I bet you he is rich also; I never make mistakes; something tells me, and I always know when a man is rich."

Richard laughed bitterly. His hope for the success of the evening had quite gone. He knew that while Toni remained in these surroundings she would be more interested in them than in him, and he wanted to get done with the necessary round, so that he could have her to himself. She seldom failed to be charming when they were quite alone; but he was beginning to learn that variety, miscellaneous trivialities, any chance interests or objects, came between him and her attention. It was all part of her life, of course, part also, as he realized, of her charm; she was always so perfectly alive to the present that it held all her thoughts; and as she took in the whole of a scene with her eyes, and never called up visions of things absent, so all her thought and attention were absorbed by what was immediately before her, and no part of them was available for ab-

stract ideas, or for anything not absolutely present.

They did not stay long in Paillard's after dinner. Much to Richard's relief, instead of the dreaded Maxim's, she suggested a theatre, and he looked forward to some such pleasure as they had enjoyed together at the opera. But the theatre resolved itself into the Folies Bergères; and when they arrived there she would not allow him to take stalls, but walked instead into the *foyer*, which was filled with a noisy throng of disreputable women and dissipated men. The performance was not even thought of; there was no interest here but a very sordid and dismal traffic in vice. Richard turned sick at the sight, and the presence of Toni added to his misery. She was quite a different sort of woman from any of the others there; she was so startlingly out of place (as he was also) that they attracted the notice of the whole crowd; the women staring at her beautiful clothes, the men nudging each other as she passed, trying to catch her eye, and making confidential remarks to one another about Richard. Toni was not at all embarrassed; she even seemed to like the admiration and envy of these disreputables; and she led Richard up to the bar, where she demanded orangeade. A vicious-looking American youth in a tweed suit and a pot-hat, who looked like a clerk, recognized her, and, ignoring Richard's presence, greeted her effusively.

“Wal, I never! if it ain’t Toni? Where have you been all this time? Say, that’s a first-grade rig-out and no mistake. Have a drink?”

Without any hesitation she held out her hand and said, “Hello, my dear! I never thought I should see you here. What you doing in Paris?” She accepted his offer of a drink, although one had already been ordered for her, and turning to Richard with “Excuse me one little minute, my dear, I want to speak to this boy,” she entered into animated conversation with him.

Richard felt that a crisis had arrived. His position was utterly false, and was in danger of becoming ridiculous. All his fastidiousness rose in revolt against the circumstances in which he was placed; his one anxiety was to get out of the place, and to avoid a row. He was white with anger, and struggling to conceal it. Toni was chatting merrily away to the seedy youth. It was an innocent acquaintance enough, so far as that went; she was far beyond the youth’s attainment as a mistress, and he was merely one of the innumerable people that knew her as a comrade of rowdy hours. It was strange that this last situation should have been brought about by one of her conspicuous merits; yet so it was. For exclusive as she was in her choice of lovers, she knew no barriers of wealth or class to govern her random comradeship, and she never forgot a face. So that any one who had ever come across her in

a company of merry-makers was sure thereafter of recognition from her; and she was never ashamed of her friends. In this action of hers, in the cordial recognition of the seedy pot-hat, were thus united expressions of her two most distinguishing qualities; the touch of the *gamine* in her, that brought her into contact with all sorts of disreputable and detrimental people, and the true human grace that made her never afraid or ashamed to greet them, in whatever company she might be.

Richard was hardly in a position, however, to appreciate the virtue in her act; and the fact that the youth was merely a comrade did not alter the impossibility of the situation. It was brought to a crisis by the band in the *foyer* beginning a waltz, and by the young man, who was something the worse for drink, but had evidently desirable qualities as a dancer, asking Toni to dance with him. She nodded her head, and then saying, "Wait a minute," crossed over to where Richard was standing in the attitude of one awaiting explanations.

"Look here, my dear, you don't mind, do you? Just one round with this boy. I haven't seen him for ever so long, and he —"

The contained and concentrated expression on Richard's face stopped her short. He was white with anger and revolt, and he spoke in a low, intense voice.

“Look here; if you speak to that fellow again, or to any other man here, I’ll walk out of the place.”

The light flashed into her eyes. An ultimatum to the spoiled darling! She stood facing him, quivering with temper, the red anger in her eyes meeting the steely regard of his. All the profound antagonism between the two temperaments blazed forth in that look, and battle was given and taken. It lasted for just three seconds. At the end of that time Toni dropped her eyes, gave a nervous little laugh, and said:

“My dear, I think you are mad. What harm is there if I do speak to him? ‘Walk out of the place!’” — she tried to mimic him, but broke down. “Oh, come along,” she said, putting her arm through his; “I don’t mind. Let us go home.”

The bugle had sounded for the assault, and Richard had carried the first encounter. But there is no fruit so bitter to the taste as the fruit of victory over some one we love.

It was not until they were nearly at their hotel that Richard remembered his gift. His anger had all gone, and left his love more than anxious to heal up the wound. He had taken her hand in the carriage, and she had let it lie there; but she had hardly spoken. She was inwardly raging at having been vanquished, and his tone of com-

mand echoed jarringly in her ears. Yet she seemed to accept his caresses and to assume, as he did, that the quarrel was made up. He was glad when he remembered his gift, and thought it would come as a pretty atonement for his anger with her.

He followed her into her room. She sat down on a sofa, and he came beside her, put his arm around her and kissed her. She did not turn her head away, but neither did she respond to the caress. She was passive, inert, as though her mind was elsewhere.

"Look, little one," he cried; "while you were asleep to-day I was busy. I was a long time looking for it, but I found it at last." He took the case out of his pocket, and Toni turned her head and became alert, like a dog who hears the word "biscuits." He put his arm around her again and drew her head close to his shoulder; she acquiesced in these movements, but kept her eyes on the box.

"Listen," he said. "I don't know that I shall ever be able to tell you or show you how much I love you, or how happy you make me. I love you so dearly that I would like to take you in my arms and carry you right away from all this beastly world. Some day perhaps I will, and then we'll be happy together, as we were at Barbizon. But until then, dear flower, we shall often be separated, with nothing of each other to hold but

the memory of all our happy hours. And I want you to have something that you can wear, something of mine that will remind you of me; so that, wherever you are, and whatever you are doing," — his voice trembled a little, — "you can just put up your hand and touch this, and say, 'He gave it to me, and he loves me.'"

She looked up at him for a moment with kind eyes, and then began to undo the parcel. Her quick nervous fingers tore at the string and the wrappings impatiently; she threw everything on one side, flung the wooden box away, and opened the case. The necklace fell out and lay extended on the white fabric of her dress, the dull old silver, the flashing semicircle of the paste, and the dark rough lumps of the emeralds. Its beauty was so quaint and unlike anything she had expected that she caught her breath, and turned to Richard a face flushed with pleasure.

"O my dear, how sweet!" she said; kissed him warmly, and then returned to her toy. Richard was picking up the scattered wrappings and the box, and did not observe her for a moment; when he did he saw that she was examining the necklace closely.

"It is very pale for gold, isn't it?" she asked.

He told her that it was silver, and explained why they had used silver for the sake of the setting and the white color. She went on examining it.

"It is not new, is it?" was her next question; and when he had told her that it was an Empire ornament, she said, "Of course, my dear, how stupid of me. It is beautiful, very beautiful!" She held it up to the light. "How they sparkle! they are a very good color, too. I am afraid my naughty boy has been — what you say? — extravagant." She had turned it over, and was looking at the back.

"But how funny," she went on. "I never see this setting before. It is to make it safer, what? How beautiful they are! But it is funny that I never see diamonds set like this. They are generally open, and —"

"Why, you little goose, it's not diamonds; it's paste, old paste, *strass* they call it."

She looked up suddenly. "Not real diamonds? I see."

He went on to explain to her the difference between the old paste and the modern rubbish, repeating a vast deal of information which he had only learned that afternoon from the dealer who had sold him the necklace. Toni still sat turning it over and over in her hands; she was looking down at it, and he could not see her face.

Presently she looked up at him, her eyes blazing with passion, and immediately looked away again. She spoke in short, nervous sentences, keeping her eyes downcast.

"I tell you something, Richard. I am offended,

very much offended, that you give me imitation diamonds. I do not understand; I ask you not ever for anything! but you give me *this!* How *dare* you?" she blazed out, and suddenly flung the necklace away from her. It flashed, a dripping line of fire, across the room, and fell with a rattle in the far corner. She rose to her feet and stood confronting him, anger, indignation, and something like hatred burning in her eyes.

Richard was turned to stone. The suddenness of the assault, the loathly meanness of point of view which could attribute to him the desire to palm off imitation jewels on her, the utterly hopeless and cruel misunderstanding which turned his loving gift into a coin, and a counterfeit one at that, stunned and paralyzed him. He seemed to have been hurled from a height and to have fallen like a stone into an abyss from which he could never rise. In a second he realized that this was the end; that the thickness of a world lay between them; that he who had spent that happy afternoon searching for a gift that could not be mistaken for payment, and paying more for it that it should not wear its value like an advertisement, and she who had thus received it, were strangers who spoke in unknown tongues.

So for perhaps a minute they remained, he standing like one dazed, looking at her with bemused eyes that saw only a void of darkness, she heaving and trembling with hateful indigna-

tion. The silence was broken by the snap of his opera-hat as he opened it. He bowed ceremoniously to her, as though he were still in a dream.

"Good night," he said.

"Good-by," she said.

BOOK III
THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

I

THE waves were flowing and following one another up the little coarse beach, trying to climb its steep slope, but after every effort falling back a little more as the ebb-tide in the channel three miles out drew them away from their desire. Richard Grey sat on a rock waiting until the tide should have ebbed far enough for him to walk dry-shod to the lighthouse; and in the meantime he watched, with dull absorption, the hypnotizing sequence of rise and fall. In this calm weather only the smallest of waves lisped against the stones, but even in them was expressed something of the vast personality of the ocean to whose shores he had returned. To-day the calm seemed to him only a physical repose of the waters, which veiled a restless preoccupation of their spirit, as though the melancholy omniscient sea had condescended to curiosity, and was interrogating the shore. Up and up came the quiet waves, feeling among the stones, turning the pebbles over and over as though in search of something, falling back a little to a clear crystal edge, as though in

meditation; and then, as if struck by some new thought, advancing again to their patient scrutiny, raking among the round pebbles with fingers of snow, and sinking back again with a long sigh that rippled away with its message of disappointment. The wild cliffs, heather-browed and capped with the softly rolling green of the downs, towered behind him in the sunshine, their precipices wet with drippings from the springs above. Something in their attitude, bowed down with the weight of ages, yet recoiling from the insidious whisper of the waves, struck him with a sense of the misery that is written on this face of Earth which she turns to the sea; dark, noble, time-worn old face, patient beneath its load of springs and autumns, staunch against unending assault, yet with tears trickling down it for pain of a knowledge that finds no utterance, and can give back no answer to the profound, eternal questionings of the sea!

As Richard sat there a kind of stupor possessed his mind. He had returned from Paris hoping to find in work and amid familiar scenes some narcotic for the gnawing misery and loneliness of his heart; but work had failed him; the workmen were all gone; and the lonely companionship of land and sea only intensified his condition of malady. He could not clearly think out his situation and reason himself, as he had hoped to do, into acceptance of it; his heart was still a rebel,

and fought and fretted against its starvation. He was fighting, as all have to fight, the eternal battle between the mind of man and the facts and destinies of life. He told himself that he was suffering from an untimely green sickness, that he was in love, and that his indisposition was even, in the eyes of experience, a laughable one; but he told himself so in vain. What happens harmlessly to the youth of twenty, springing up and withering quickly in the thin soil of his character, happens fatefully to the man of thirty. His love for Toni was no light growth, but had rooted itself, for good or ill, deep in his nature; and since it had been an independent enterprise of the heart, and had never been really reconciled with his mind, it was in vain that he now summoned his mind to extricate him from the unhappiness it had brought him. He was adrift, rudderless for the moment, on the dark waters of misery, and knew not where to turn for help or cure. Often he was not conscious of thought, but sat, as he sat now, staring out over the moving sea, letting its salt breath drift in upon him, and its plangent voice speak to him in vague and mighty messages. All the summer was sad about him; the corn in upland fields stood tall and golden, waiting in the hot sunshine for the day of the sickle and of harvest. All that passionate promise of the spring and early summer which he had felt when he was busy with his work was over

now; the gorse had gone; the May had followed it; the red army of the foxgloves had marched forth, occupied the hedgerows, and vanished in their day; the honeysuckle and the wild rose had come and gone; there remained only the sheets of gold in the fields, the blush of heather on the downs, to bring the great cycle of accomplishment to its end. So still and silent it was that the very summer, like the inquisitive sea, seemed to be waiting and watching him; his own accomplished work stood fair and deserted on the outer rocks; the world seemed empty of labor or promise.

When the tide had ebbed sufficiently, Richard rowed himself across the little gap of deep water between Poltesco Head and the Snail Rocks, and walked over the causeway that led along the reef to its seaward extremity where the tower stood. As he climbed the iron ladder and opened the door at the base of the tower, he was struck with a sense of the desolation and emptiness of finished buildings before they have been occupied and used. The clean stone, the smell of new wood and paint, the echo of his steps on the stone stairway, the humming of the air through the ventilating shaft, all reminded him that his work was done, or practically done, and only waited to be invaded and occupied by those who were to keep watch there. His father, who in public

works was not innocent of a taste for the solemn flourishes of the Albert period, would have thought his designs incomplete if they had lacked the dignity of inscriptions; and now, in letters cut into the stones of the tower itself, his pious intention stood fulfilled. Around the circumference of the inside walls in the bottom story were carved the words:

NISI DOMINUS ÆDIFICAVERIT DOMUM IN VANUM
LABORAVERUNT QUI ÆDIFICANT EAM

and high up in the light-room, where the keeper on duty would sit, the corresponding verse:

NISI DOMINUS CUSTODIERIT CIVITATEM FRUSTRA
VIGILAT QUI CUSTODIT EAM

As the letters caught his eye, he thought grimly of their obvious application to his edifice of happiness, which had been so suddenly destroyed; and thought also bitterly and resentfully of the conventional Dominus who had neglected to be its architect. How gladly at that moment would he have had the whole tower swept away, if he could but have secured and completed that Babel-tower of his joy, which stood desolate because the two builders could not understand each other! A kind of hatred of the work of his hands, a jealousy of its stability, took hold of him. Was it only with his hands that he could build? He had

loved the lighthouse in the building; but how much more had he not loved her into the fabric of whose life he had built his heart! Yet she was lost to him, and his love come to shipwreck, while this thing of stone and mortar stood there in the sunshine, unshaken by wave or weather. . . . He went up through the two lower stories, in which were to be kept the stores necessary for the lamp and its keepers. Above it was the kitchen, a bright homely room with its cosy cooking-range and dresser, its new chairs and presses and cupboards; above that again were two sleeping-rooms, and higher still, a hundred and thirty feet above the waves, the light-room with its trellised walls of glass and gun-metal, and, in the centre, shrouded in dust-sheets, the lamp with its mirrors and lenses and condensers. The fitters had left it only the day before, and a few days later would return to put the finishing touches to its adjustment and set the clockwork machinery, by means of which it was made to revolve and show its punctual flashes all around the horizon.

Richard sat down and looked about him. Here it was, all finished; and he did not care! He remembered how he had longed for and dreamed of its completion, how he had watched over every inch of its growth, how his life and thought, and his father's life and thought before him, had been built into it. Yet it interested him no longer, his pride in it was gone; and gone also was that

sense, on which he had counted so certainly, of security and satisfaction in labor accomplished. What he had done seemed to him after all a thing outside him, no possession of his; what he had been, what he had felt—that seemed in these despairing moments the only reality. A thousand times he cursed himself for his haste in leaving Toni; a thousand times he almost decided to go back, and at any cost and by any means make his peace with her, yet was always held back by some inherent strength in his character, some wakeful intellectual monitor who warned him that it would be hopeless. So he sat, an alien within the walls of his own building, homesick on his own ground, all his soul longing for the woman he had loved, and the scenes amid which he had loved and possessed her.

That was one day, typical of many on which he would try to occupy himself with the lighthouse, and to force himself into an interest in his work. But there were other days in which the nostalgia for what he had left behind him in Paris made the very sight of the lighthouse and the works hateful to him; when he would turn his back on them, and, much to the delight of Rufus, who did not at all approve of people who sat on one rock for hours at a time, take long walks about the bare promontory, over downs and along the cliffs, and try to find in fatigue of the body some

antidote to the torture of his mind. For the unhappiness caused by the loss of his love was complicated by hideous doubts and jealousies. What was she doing? How much did she care for him? How long would his memory be her only companion? He thought of writing to her, but the same hateful doubts prevented him. Who would read his letters? How, and in what circumstances, would she receive them? He dared not think; the doubt, alas! was hardly a doubt at all; and to the agony of longing for her, and the torture of believing her defiled, was added the misery of realizing that he could still love and long for a creature whose life might not bear thinking about. . . . These were savage moods, agonies of the flesh and spirit into which we dare not enter; but there were saner moments in which he was able to think more calmly and tenderly of her and more justly of himself, when the sentimentalist that has his day in every tragedy of the heart gave place a little to the robuster man.

II

LADY KILLARD looked out of the window of the little drawing-room of the Hermitage, her pretty forehead wrinkled into a frown of discontent. Rain had blown up from the southwest; and she and Margaret Lauder had been driven from their work in the garden to find occupation indoors.

"I wonder why Mr. Grey hasn't been to see us? If he had any imagination he'd come on a day like this and cheer us up. I know he's been back some time."

"He intended to come back a month ago, didn't he?" said Margaret, looking up from some lace work. "I wonder what kept him?"

"He evidently found some great attraction in Paris," said Lady Killard a little maliciously.

There was a pause, during which the younger woman continued to work at her fine and elaborate fabric of lace, and Lady Killard turned from the window and stood in the middle of the room rapt in thought, her eyes straying from rafter to cornice, and from door to window. She was engaged in her favorite autumn occupation of planning alterations to the cottage, and had spent

most of the morning in demonstrating to Margaret how by taking away a staircase she could add a dining-room, and showing that the wall only needed to be moved a few inches for many feet to be added to the length of the little hall.

"I'm sure those beams could be cut away a little there," she said, emerging into speech; "if only Mr. Grey were here I could ask him; he knows all about those things."

"John's cynicisms seem to sink rather deep into Mr. Grey," said Margaret, also bringing the end of her train of thought to the light.

"And quite right, too; he's not an old man or a clergyman. He'd be a horribly dull old man if he went on as he's begun."

Margaret looked up with a smile. "Then when he grew older you'd have to drop his acquaintance, as he wouldn't fit!"

Lady Killard nodded her head sagaciously. "I've great hopes that he is going to fit; but he will probably be unbearable for a little while. People ought to get the measles over when they are younger."

"It always interests me," said Margaret, "why every one supposes the measles are necessary. If you're a healthy child it seems to me you shouldn't have them — especially as they are epidemic, and generally caught from some one else — John, I suppose, in this case."

"Oh, you're always down on poor John!"

"Well, on your own showing, Jane, he seems to have deserted Mr. Grey at a critical moment. Perhaps he found him too apt a pupil."

"My dear Margaret! what do you know of such things?"

Margaret's clear eyes looked up from her work. "Well, then, I don't know, I suppose; and I certainly don't want to. But there seems to be a convention about Paris."

Lady Killard laughed merrily. "Why, my dear Margaret, you remind me of those dear old ladies who still think Paris is another name for wickedness, and who, if one says one is going over to buy some clothes, shake their fingers and say, 'Oh, naughty thing!' They used to shiver in their last year's muslin frocks crossing the Channel, I believe, the idea being that everything got ruined."

"The Albert Period again!"

"Oh, bother the Albert Period," said Lady Killard, ringing for tea. She went to the open door and looked out over the doubtful landscape. "Why, it's clearing up; there's the sun. And, what do you think, Margaret? Talk of the devil! There's Mr. Grey coming up through the lower gate. This is most exciting!"

The arrival of any friend was welcome on such a day, but Richard's coming was an event of genuine interest to both women. They had felt a little disappointed that he should have seemed

to avoid them after his return, but it was forgotten in the pleasure with which the three friends met.

“The return of the Prodigal, Mr. Grey!” said Lady Killard. “We’ve become quite wasted, sitting at the window watching for you for weeks past. Now you must be cross-examined and give an account of yourself.”

Richard laughed and made his excuses, and for some time their talk was of commonplaces. The two women, each in her own way, were charming in their welcome; and, as so often happens when friends are congenial, the three met as old and intimate friends after this absence following their first brief acquaintance. Richard was unaffectedly glad to see them again, but he was a little embarrassed in his manner, and he felt that unless he could talk to them about Toni their intercourse could not be quite satisfying to him. Yet the moment he came into their presence, he realized that between the woman that he loved, and the two women that he liked, there was a gulf wide and unfathomable which no effort or desire of his could ever span. The thought made him jealous and a little resentful on behalf of the absent Toni. If only these people knew what she was really like! They couldn’t help liking her, and forgiving her her trespasses, he thought.

“Please be useful, Mr. Grey, and tell me what people are wearing in Paris.” It was Lady Kil-

lard who spoke, hardly breaking in on Richard's abstracted thought.

"Low-necked gray dresses and big hats with roses," he murmured, almost to himself, and looking out of the window.

Margaret Lauder looked up from her work. "What, all of them?"

"Well, I saw them everywhere I went," said Richard with a note of amiable defiance in his voice.

"Where *did* you go in Paris, Mr. Grey?" asked Lady Killard. "John tells us nothing, you know."

"I really don't remember," said Richard. "All I know is that we were going all the time. I think we've been everywhere."

"There's no doubt that John is a wonderful cicerone," said Margaret.

Richard laughed. "Oh, John! he's a broken reed. He forsook me early—"

"I suppose as soon as he thought you were fledged?" said Lady Killard. But she felt that the conversation was becoming a little awkward, and led it back to dresses, as safer ground.

"Low necks and hats are rather a novelty, aren't they?" she asked, innocently.

"Oh, no," said Richard; "the fashion came in two years ago on Thursday evenings at the Rallye Club."

Margaret Lauder laid down her lace in her lap

and broke into unrestrained laughter, her eyes dancing with amusement. "But this is really very serious, Mr. Grey!"

Lady Killard and Richard were rather taken aback with her laughter. "One wouldn't think it was serious, Margaret, to hear you laughing!"

"I'm so sorry, Jane, but I couldn't help it. It is quite too amusing!"

"What are you laughing at?" asked Richard.

"At you," replied Margaret, looking at him with the laughter still in her eyes.

Richard began to laugh too. He thought it a more wholesome attitude than Lady Killard's somewhat strained shirking of the subject.

On second thoughts, however, he began to wonder whether he might not in some way have betrayed himself; whether the instinct of the virtuous woman for evidences of social anarchy had not revealed something or other of his condition to these two clever, clear-headed women of the world. He thought that otherwise they would surely have quizzed him a little more openly; there was on Lady Killard's part a very distinct caution that was suspicious. It was his own fault, of course, for carrying Toni so clearly in his mind even while he was talking to them; he was like a moth that tries to avoid the candle-flame, but keeps blundering into it; and he became self-conscious.

It was Margaret who came to the rescue this time with a change of subject.

“Don’t you think I’m clever?” she asked. “I’ve done all that since this morning.” And she showed him the creamy fabric of lace, growing by single stitches into its intricate and involved patterns. How pretty she was, with her dark wavy hair, her warm coloring, her calm brow and clear-cut face, her wise, kind eyes! As he looked at her he felt again what he had felt walking to church that evening — such ages ago! how much he liked her, and how much more he could like her if — he stopped short — if he did not love some one else. He had felt, vaguely enough, that there was a barrier of some kind between him and Margaret Lauder; and he knew that if Toni had not come into his life that barrier might not have existed now. But what a different thing this mild, orderly, respectable love would have been! As soon as he realized that Toni was a barrier between them his resentment and jealousy returned; he seemed to be talking with strangers. Of course the two women noticed his embarrassment, and although they had no very clear idea of its origin, instinct told them to respect it; and in their anxiety to avoid adding to it the conversation became artificial again. They spoke of the cottage, of Lady Killard’s building plans, of the garden, of the lighthouse and the coming inauguration of the light; but

they did not talk of Paris any more. Richard was therefore rather dull; his lassitude and weariness of spirit, which had been dispelled a little by the meeting with these two friends again, returned upon him. He became irritated, too, by Lady Killard's careful handling of their trivial conversation; she kept it strictly within the circle of their joint interests, and diverted it from Richard himself. She knew too much, he thought; but from the height of his passionate experience he looked down almost with contempt on her almost certain misconception of the case. For Margaret he had no resentment; she knew less, he felt, and understood more. He could imagine Lady Killard being slightly jealous, with that impersonal jealousy felt by a class against those who prey upon its property; but jealousy or resentment seemed alike impossible for Margaret Lauder. There was no curiosity either in her attitude, which was simply one of remoteness, a distant friendliness. Yet in some odd way he had been able to realize, in the course of this short visit, that there could be no advance in his friendship with her while Toni was involved in his life.

The weather had quite cleared before Richard went away, leaving an evening of slanting sunshine and sweet, warm air. He felt disinclined to go home to his empty house, and struck inland instead for a walk. The paths he followed brought

him to Erissey Major, a place consisting of a little ancient church and a farmhouse set in a clump of noble old trees, and isolated together on the downs. He walked fast, his thoughts revolving in their now habitual circle, from memories of pleasure to memories of pain; and he was glad to go in and rest for a little in the shade of the churchyard.

The noise of Paris had been in his ears while he walked; the silence fell suddenly about him as he awoke to the present; and he thought, as he sat down and leaned against a gravestone, that he had never been in so quiet a place. There was a soft piping from the birds in the tall elms that crowded so thickly about the church, and a faint sound of bees hung upon the air, but no other noise found its way into the precinct. Richard was no frequenter of graveyards, and the commonplace thoughts suggested by the presence of so many faded memorials of people long dead and forgotten were new to him. The solemn gray tower, the tumbled heaps of the graves, the tangle and riot of all the green life, the great, bending bushes of fuchsia and veronica, the shrubs that through generations of neglect had grown into trees, all added to the sense of human death and oblivion that the place inspired; and yet to Richard, tortured and wearied though he was, the common sentimental illusion made no appeal. He realized, as he sat there with his dog blinking at

his feet, that the peace of the graveyard was for the living; that to taste it one must have the blood of life in one's veins, the burdens and pains of life at one's heart; and that the oblivious company beneath the grass had no part or benefit in it. Thus he escaped self-pity, that dangerous miasma of the graveyard; and he found in it the soothing and mellowing influence that it has held for the healthy mind of every age. They who bring their sorrows to the garden of the dead bring them to a good place where they can hurt no one, and where the pretence that they are endless or unbearable fades before so many reminders of mortality.

His glance, wandering around the huddled slabs and monuments, fell on a verse cut into a granite headpiece: *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.* As he read them he found himself unconsciously smiling with pleasure at the words—beautiful jargon of the great unfading dream of humanity. They seemed so gay and kind and reasonable, like a thing said to comfort a child and help him to be good through a difficult day. The protecting care of the promise was tempting, making him long to be one of that gay company who were to be gathered together in a diadem. He thought of the people he knew, and wondered what sort of jewels they would make; he thought of Margaret—and then he thought of Toni, outside all these

dreams and promises — “My poor little girl, they wouldn’t have her!” — the old poisonous wound of sentiment broke out afresh.

Richard got up and walked out of the graveyard, threshing at the nettles with his stick. “Oh,” he said to himself, “these are all dead things, fables; the people who said them are dead, the people they are said about are dead; but she’s alive and I’m alive! What does all the rest matter?” Yet the next moment he remembered that she was dead to him, dead of her own act and his; and that if he cherished her still in his heart he cherished a dead thing, more dead than if she lay there sleeping beneath the grass. His mind groped and groped amid the cravings and contradictions that possessed it. What was the unending ache in his heart? he asked himself; and sickened at the word love, with its thousand meanings and abuses, that was all the answer he could find. Like so many others, he thought of it as a thing outside life, or at most incidental to it; not as the life in little which they who live through its fires learn it to be. By its touch we are tried, and learn whether we are to march with the stalwarts or tarry with the weaklings; it will lead us to the stars, or scorch us in hell’s flames; and through it we must pass to the possession of ourselves, as through the gate of death to whatever may lie beyond our horizon. The love of brave mature hearts is no summer’s play of sun

and shadow; it is Nature's impulse, the match she sets to our lives, that shall send them either zigzagging to burst and scatter their purposes, or soaring to rocket heights where they may blossom into flowers of fire. Domestic love, man's doubtful tame creature, may serve man's purposes; passionate love serves Nature's, and makes us priests and ministers to God. And not, O Richard, by broodings and indulgences any more than by the whips and hot irons of civil law is that true passionate love tamed; but in the heart only, in the fires of its own ordeal, when passion has learned to put service before craving.

III

ON a morning toward the end of September Richard received a package addressed in John Lauder's handwriting, and a letter dated from the house of a relative in Scotland where he was staying. The letter was as follows:

“DEAR RICHARD:— How are you? I meant to send this before, but have been running about so much that I haven't had time to finish it. The likeness might be better, I think, but the general idea is there. We are having vile weather here, and the birds are as wild as my fellow guests are tame; but I have only another week to put in, and then I'm off to Italy. Why don't you come with me? I hear you are practically finished with Cornwall.

“By the way, I was in Paris ten days ago— God! what a desert—and I heard that your friend, the original of my daub, is still there. She never went away at all, it seems, and has been there all through the slack season— which is odd, to say the least of it. I didn't see her, or any of our friends, but from what I hear, she seems to

have been ill; in other words, I expect that the little bottle you told me of has been refilled. But she seems to have contrived to keep Maxim's alive through the dull weeks. Yours ever,

“JOHN LAUDER.”

Richard read and re-read the letter, and sat looking at the written sheets for a long time. Then he opened the parcel, and found that it contained a painting of Toni done from the Barbizon sketch. Like all Lauder's finished work, it did not quite fulfil the promise of the hasty sketch; it lacked the certainty of touch, the freedom and sureness of handling which had given distinction to the pencil drawing; but still it was unmistakably Toni, and spoke eloquently to Richard's hungry senses. As he looked at it, all the longing that he had been trying to stifle through these dreary weeks broke from its feeble restraints and demanded to be satisfied. The news in the letter also filled him with a new tumult of doubts. Had she cared more than he thought? Had he driven her back into the nervous disorganization from which he had rescued her? A voice within, prompted by his longings, told him that he had, and that it was his clear duty to go and seek her out again, and save her from herself. Yet still in the upper seats of the intelligence, where sits the incorruptible jury that we call common sense, he found no answering decision; the thing had

been tried, and had been found wanting; it had ended disastrously, and would so end again.

One thing, however, was made startlingly clear to him by the effect of the letter and picture: he saw, as in a dream, the image of the man he had been in these recent weeks — useless, idle, brooding, miserable, unable to work, unable to read or be interested in anything or anybody, tormented by memory, indecision, vain regrets, and desires — and life, the life he so proved, with which he had hoped to do so much, slipping by him unused. His old philosophy of doing — what had become of it? A kind of panic seized him; a terror of the passing day and the coming night, in which no work could be done or joy savored; fragments of philosophies, things read and half-forgotten, floated on the commotion of his mind. His eye fell on the book-shelves; what would Carlyle have said of him, that bitter, wise old man whose teaching had always appealed to him, and with whom, in spite of his bitterness and hysteria, he had so often found himself in sympathy? He remembered some verses of Goethe translated by Carlyle, which he used to read over and over again; he could not remember them clearly; only vague phrases came back to him, admonishing, advising. Hastily he took down the book, and turned the leaves until he came to the place; and with the portrait of Toni on the table beside the book he read the verses.

“The Future hides in it
Gladness and sorrow ;
We press still thorow,
Naught that abides in it
Daunting us — onward.

“And solemn before us,
Veiled, the dark Portal ;
Goal of all mortal :—
Stars silent rest o'er us,
Graves under us silent !

“While earnest thou gazest
Comes boding of terror,
Comes phantasm and error ;
Perplexes the bravest
With doubt and misgiving.

“But heard are the Voices,
Heard are the Sages,
The Worlds and the Ages :
‘Choose well ; your choice is
Brief, and yet endless.’”

He looked from one to the other — from the face into which he read so much that others could never see in it, with which was associated so much passionate happiness (for he had already forgotten what was not happy), to the solemn, earnest admonition of the poet ; and he felt that he had come to cross-roads, that he could no longer live as he had been living through these weeks, that a choice must be made — “brief, and yet endless.” He must either cure himself of

his fever of unrest and craving, and take up his work again in the belief that there was no common ground on which he and Toni could meet; or he must go to her help. His image of her, now that he was no longer with her, was no more true to reality than it had been when they were together, or else he could hardly have entertained the second alternative seriously; his heart, determined idealist that it was, told him that love like his could remove all barriers and dissolve all difficulties. Well, then, he must choose; but how to choose? Suddenly he resolved to take a day to think over it, to go for a long walk, and see if a day of exercise and changing scenes would not help him to a decision. He realized that, as he could not have considered his choice dispassionately if Toni had been there, neither could he do so amid the scenes of his work, in sight of the lighthouse that had come to appear in his eyes as her jealous rival. He felt that he must be away from both, on some neutral ground where he could be insulated from the magnetism of both forces. He picked up his stick, called his dog, locked the door of his house, and set forth across the downs.

His direction lay northward and westward along tracks leading over the rolling carpet of heather and dwarf gorse. Heather purple, red, and white, and gorse that was beginning to be golden again

— they mingled together in a fabric of tender hues that extended to the horizon on every side. The day was threatening, but there were intervals of bright sunshine, and the air was soft and fragrant. The dog ran busily about, nosing into rabbit-holes, or looking back at Richard for approval, pricking intelligent ears and slanting a lively tail; and but for the rabbits, a few piping birds, and now and then a sea-gull that flew crying overhead, they seemed to have the world to themselves. Richard found thought not so easy, after all; he was pleasantly conscious of his surroundings, and found his attention absorbed by the things immediately about him, by the color of a flower, a clump of late blackberries on a hedge, the direction of a path, the flight of a rabbit. As he walked on, mile after mile and hour after hour, he seemed to become drugged by the sweet air, soothed by the exercise, and hypnotized by the act of putting down one foot after another, until he seemed to be walking out of the present into some country of sleep. There was nothing in his surroundings to suggest modern England. Rather there were signs of almost every age but the present: British barrows, cromlechs, Saxon fortifications, Roman encampments, Norman and mediæval churches, when he came to one of the scattered hamlets that lay on his course. Such industry as there were signs of was but the patient tilling of the earth; he was walking backwards into

Time, away from his frets and difficulties. And as he walked, they seemed to dwindle in the distance, to be not so cruel and insoluble after all; something, he felt sure, would occur to him as a decision; in the meantime the great thing was to walk. He rested at an inn in the middle of the day and ate a meal of bread and cheese; and then walked on again in a direction that he thought would lead him back to the coast. But in this he was mistaken; he found himself once more on downs, with no very clear knowledge of his whereabouts; and as it was getting on toward evening, and the sky was looking threatening, he began to be anxious, and catching sight of a lonely cottage on the downs, went there to ask his way. To his astonishment he found that he was twenty miles from home, and three from the nearest village where he could hope to get a bed for the night; so there was nothing for it but to strike across in the direction indicated.

He had not gone more than a mile, however, before the storm broke in earnest, and in a few minutes he was drenched to the skin. It was beginning to be dark, moreover; and he awoke from his melancholy reveries to realize that a night spent wandering about the soaking downs would be far from pleasant. At this moment he saw through the gloom a building or group of buildings half a mile to his left, and he struck across at a run to seek shelter from the rain that was

now driving solidly down. As he drew nearer he saw lights shining from one of the buildings; a cross on the gate of a neighboring field suggested religion; and he then remembered to have heard of a Trappist monastery somewhere in this neighborhood. This was evidently the place, and if so, would probably afford him shelter. Richard knew very little about monasteries, and had never been in one; and he was conscious of a somewhat eery feeling as he approached the great cross-surmounted gates and heard the sound of singing coming from the lighted chapel. But the rain hastened his steps, and he was presently ringing the bell of the only door which was open to public approach.

He was received by a monk in brown, a lay brother, who led him along a passage into a bare waiting-room. The convent were singing the office of Vespers, it appeared, and the guest-master was in the chapel; he would come out presently and attend to the visitor. The lay brother disappeared, and left Richard to his own meditations, which were much concerned with the strange environment in which he found himself. He had only been alone a few minutes, however, when he heard a clatter of feet along the stone corridor outside; the monks had evidently come out of the chapel. A few moments later the door was opened by an elderly, gray-bearded man, who

introduced himself as Father David, the guest-master.

"Dear me, sir, you are wet," he said; "you must come and get dry." And he led Richard without more ado to a great kitchen, where half a dozen lay brothers were busy with pots and pans before a roaring fire. While Richard was being attended to, Rufus was led off to an out-house in a mood somewhat suspicious of the religious order; but everything was done in silence and by signs, the father himself using as few words as possible to Richard while they were in the kitchen.

When he had been dried, however, and his wet coat left to the lay brothers, Father David led him away to the reception-room, and there asked him what they could do for him.

"You have already done more than I have any right to accept," said Richard. "I only wanted a few minutes' shelter, and directions to the nearest village where I can get a bed;" and he explained how he had been caught in the storm.

"You won't get a bed anywhere near here," said Father David; "you had much better stay with us. Hospitality to strangers is a rule with us — as well as a privilege," he added, kindly.

"But — I am not a Catholic," said Richard, awkwardly.

"Well, that's the more pity," said the good-natured monk; "but that is no reason why we

should allow you to get wet." He treated him like an unpractical child. "Why," he said, "you look not at all well. I am afraid you are not very happy about something? Well, don't think me inquisitive or impertinent, but if we can do anything for you — if you would like to talk to a priest, I will speak to the prior."

Richard found himself ready to babble like a child, and with difficulty restrained himself, absurd as the impulse was, from pouring out his whole story into the ears of this shrewd, kindly old man in the white flannel robe.

"I could not think of troubling you," he said; "I must keep my troubles to myself. And I don't know how to thank you for your offer of hospitality."

"Why, that is what we are here for," said the monk with great simplicity. "Now we will come and see your room. There is an hour before supper, and I can show you over part of the monastery, if you like."

Richard gladly accepted, and together they made a tour of the buildings not actually occupied by the monks. As they passed through the cloisters they met a dozen or so of the fathers taking their evening exercise and meditation, walking briskly to and fro over the wooden floor, wrapped in the eternal silence of their order, and averting their eyes from Richard as he passed. He saw the refectory, the sacristy, the chapter-house, the li-

brary, the farm-buildings where some lay brothers were busy milking the cows; and as they went Father David explained to him something of their austere life — how they rose at two in the morning and went to bed after compline at eight, sleeping on hard boards and wooden pillows in their day-clothes, and covered only by a single blanket; how — with the exception of those who looked after the guests and did business with neighboring farmers — they never spoke, and practised a thousand austerities; how they lived and worked hard on two meals a day, never touching meat or wine from year's end to year's end. Richard looked wonderingly. "And do you never want to go away?" He asked the inevitable question of the outsider.

"Dear me, no," said Father David, smiling indulgently. "Why should we want to go away? That would be a strange idea, when we are so happy here together! We have so many things to do, the day seems to slip by far too fast. And then there are the offices — but you will hardly understand that," he added; "only, you see, we could not be happy if we were not serving and praising God."

They talked a good deal, the monk displaying a lively interest in the outside world at large and in Richard's work in particular, Richard on his part being equally inquisitive as to the life of these recluses, with its austere restrictions and

minute organization. To him it all seemed part of the unreality of the day, and of the excursion into the part that his walk had taken; after his progress through British, Saxon, and Norman England, it seemed only natural to finish the day in a monastery of the middle ages. And it seemed hardly less real when he was seated at the bare supper-table with the half-dozen other guests — a couple of seminarists, a priest, and three laymen in retreat — eating a rough but plentiful meal of fish, bread, and tea, and listening to the monotonous voice of a father who came in and read aloud a dry theological treatise while they were eating. There was no conversation then or afterward; as soon as they had finished, the priest rapped on the table, the father's reading abruptly ceased, grace was said, and they separated to various religious duties. Richard remained in the reception-room looking at the religious volumes there until the beating of the chapel bell summoned the whole convent to compline, and Father David came to show him his place in the chapel.

It was a long, narrow building, furnished with images, altars, pictures, and an organ. There was a transept for the guests; and from where Richard sat he could see the two long rows of plain stalls furnished with heavy breviaries and missals. Presently the monks began to arrive; the lay brothers first, who congregated together in another transept; and afterward, one by one, and by com-

panies of twos and threes, the fathers themselves. They strode awkwardly with bowed heads, their white habits swinging behind them, their rough shoes echoing on the wooden floor—forty or fifty of them, men middle-aged and old, with faces of varying intelligence and refinement, but all, oddly enough, bearing the marks of perfect health. They turned around and saluted the altar as they passed, bowing awkwardly from the waist, with a sweep of the white robe, and taking their places in order in the stalls. Last of all came the abbot, a tall, gaunt, ungainly man of middle age, with a rough gray beard and a kindling eye, in dress only distinguished from the rest by the ring on his finger and the simple cross that hung from a chain around his neck. As he strode to his place the bell and the sound of footfalls ceased, and there was a moment's silence in the chapel, broken by the voice of the reader beginning the office—*Jube, Domne, Benedicere*—with the drop to a low note on the last two syllables. Some one had given Richard a book, and he was able to follow the prayers and blessings, psalms and antiphons, of which the office is composed. The continual petitions for a quiet night, safe from evil and dreams, struck him as beautiful but a little childish; but the chanting of the psalms, sung by all those rough voices to a single Gregorian tone, seemed to him most austere and solemn. Out of the many noble verses, one struck him especially

and remained in his memory: *Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est; habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar.* He did not exactly know what or where Kedar was, but he felt that he understood the psalmist; that he too had dwelt too long in Kedar, and that "*Heu mihi!*" was perhaps the only possible comment to make upon the fact.

The unfamiliar scene in the chapel, coming at the end of a day of such varied and searching emotions, impressed him more than he realized. He had always thought of monks either as unnatural and probably vicious persons, or as poor, emaciated creatures who had no resemblance to men; and he was not a little astonished at this community of robust, hard-working monks, with their eighteen-hours day, their two vegetarian meals, their rough, strong voices, their wholesome faces, their silence and mortification. Luxury, freedom, the joys of love, were things unknown to them; yet they looked contented, and were even, if Father David was to be believed, happy! During the progress of the office with its prayers and chantings, its pauses and silences, its flickering lights and row of bowed heads, he thought of these things. The scene was so unfamiliar and foreign, and yet so English — a bit of old England of the happy days before men troubled their heads about theology. Richard found himself envying the monks their harsh, happy life of labor and

praise; they, of all men, seemed to have the right to praise with their lips, who praised so bravely with the toil of their hands!

He passed out with the rest before the abbot, who sprinkled each one with holy water, and brought the day to an end with his blessing. He went straight to bed, for he was tired, but he did not immediately go to sleep. The strange bed and stranger environment kept him awake, still puzzling over his choice; but gradually a light seemed to break on him. Mortification! that was a means he had not tried; perhaps it was the right way, after all. If these poor monks could mortify themselves for nothing but an idea, surely he could do it in a greater interest. He began to realize that he had always shirked the facts of Toni's life, and that there lay the whole difficulty of his choice. If he could see it as it was, he would see, perhaps, that it was impossible he should have any part in it; at any rate he could try; he could subject himself to the trial of seeing her as she was, without any knowledge of his presence. Thus, he felt, he might cure himself of the poison that was destroying his life; he could force himself to face the bitter truth, at any cost of pain or loss. Before he fell asleep, with the compline psalms ringing in his ears, he had resolved to confront himself with the cruel facts of Toni's life; and he fell asleep more happily for the decision, although he knew it would

cost him an agony more sharp than any he had yet known. . . . He was awakened in the small hours by sounds of organ and voices from the chapel, where the monks were singing matins and lauds; and the music, floating to him on the dark vacancy of night, mingled with his dreams and turned them to prayers.

He left regretfully the next morning, although the place seemed not the same by daylight; it seemed a hundred years since he had walked up to it in the dark and storm, and since the rows of monks had chanted in the lighted chapel. He thanked Father David, who looked at him a little wistfully.

"It's a pity you are not a Catholic," he said, shaking his head, "you would understand so many things! We haven't all got the same vocation," he added with a sigh; "some of us can only save our souls by leaving the world, and some only by living and working in it. Well, you have a great vocation; it's a great work that you are doing, my son. God bless you in it; some day — who knows? — perhaps you will come to the Church; I will always pray for you."

"Good-by, father, and thank you again a thousand times. You have done more for me than you know."

They shook hands warmly, and the monk stood looking through the gate as Richard walked on with Rufus frisking about him, glad of his escape

even from the friendly lay brothers. Richard looked back and waved his hand; and the gate clashed before the white-robed figure, and hid him from view. Richard felt as though he had left a load as well as a friend behind him in the monastery; and though he guessed something of the torture of what lay before him, he felt that he would have strength to endure it. His long walk back across the downs was not unhappy, and he slept soundly in his own bed that night. The next day was spent in making some final arrangements for the installation of the keepers and the inauguration of the light, in case he should not be back in time to see it lit for the first time; and that evening, with a courage that began to waver a little, he started for London.

IV

RICHARD arrived in Paris in the evening, dressed, dined alone and miserably, and went to the theatre to pass the hours that divide the Parisian evening from the night. From the moment of his arrival at the railway station, the whole of his former sensations had returned to him in a flood of memories and associations; he felt like an exile come home. The fact that a fortnight represented the whole of his life there was contradicted at every turn by the ghosts that haunted him as he drove through the streets and boulevards; and he realized what most of us realize clearly at least once in our lives — that time, as we commonly reckon it, is but an illusion, a convenient symbol, and that the intensity with which we live is alone the measure of our existence. As he walked through Paris on that autumn evening, all the rest of his life seemed to fall away from him like a perished husk, and to become a thing of dream and vapor. His long and strenuous education, his happy comradeship in work with his father, his pride in the lighthouse, the labors in which he had thought to find a sober and immortal joy — these now appeared,

but as an episode in a dim past; and the lights and sounds of evening Paris, its white dignity, its luxurious glitter, represented the real and central meaning of existence.

It added something to his misery that he should thus, returning to tear from his heart the beloved thing that preyed upon it, find his whole soul going out in longing, and borne away on the shining river of pleasures that forever fleets through Paris. He had come determined to see the ugliness which he believed to underlie the whole banquet of pleasure; he found it more beautiful, more alluring, more compelling than ever. He had come determined to realize that Toni belonged to that world and not to his; that she came of a different race, breathed a different atmosphere from his; that she, in her single-hearted service of pleasure, was a creature of nature, and he of civilization; that she was primitive and eternal, while he was of time and evolution. Some such assurance he had arrived at in his absence; but now that he was back in Paris the human influence of their union seized upon him again, and gave the lie to his pretences. The very atmosphere of Paris on this scented September evening was warm and redolent of her, and clung about his senses like the scent of her hair and the touch of her skin; and as the evening throngs began to surge in the boulevards, and the tide of pleasure to rise and flow around him, he found

himself hastening as though to a loving tryst, instead of to the crucifixion on which he had determined.

He stayed no more than half an hour in the theatre: he could listen or attend to nothing but the rows of men and women in the audience, so many of them happy to be together, and untroubled by such tortures and difficulties as his. He wandered out again; and now he found himself regarding every well-dressed man he saw with bitterness and hatred, and with the suspicion that he was a buyer in the terrible markets of pleasure. Yet his mind was not overwhelmed by his emotions; he knew what he had come for, and meant to do it. It was only when sights and sounds set trains of associated ideas on fire in his mind that his step quickened and he walked as though in an eager dream; till suddenly he would remember, with a sickening shudder, what he had come for, and would arrest his hurrying steps. He found himself in the Place de la Madeleine, that quiet backwater where the tides of night do not flow, but whence can be heard their uproar as they go by on the adjoining boulevard; and outside a café there, under the shadow of the great church, he sat down to collect and pull himself together for the ordeal that was before him.

The street, so busy by day, so quiet by night, was almost empty; and as he looked up at the great colonnade of the Madeleine ranked against

the star-dusted sky, something of the peace that resides in things of stone and marble rested for a moment on his feverish mind. That for which the building stood made no definite appeal to him, and there was for him nothing in common between the wind-beaten Cornish monastery and this fashionable theatre of religion — the Catholic *opéra* as Lauder had called it. But its beauty is a pagan beauty, and externally at least it remains a Greek temple; and its wonderful mass and proportion, floating as it were in the violet sky, pleased and soothed Richard's jangled nerves. Until midnight he sat beneath its shadow; then he got up and walked quickly toward Maxim's.

As on the night of his first visit there, the tide of money and beauty, pleasure, folly, vice, and love, was flowing in at the door. The four wheeling panels revolved unceasingly; carriages drove up at every moment, and dainty figures clad in lace and chiffon hurried across the strip of pavement, plunged through the turning door, and waited to be joined by their black-garbed partners. There was a constant sound of carriage doors being slammed, and of horses' feet striking the polished roadway. Whenever the door revolved a snatch of music made itself heard, and a stream of light shot across the pavement, as though the place were literally overflowing with light and life and sound.

As he passed the door the porter touched his

hat to Richard — an incident the essential irony of which was not lost upon him. He, recognized as a patron! The hot air of the place rushed upon him like a vicious caress, redolent of wine, and food, and flowers, and tobacco smoke. The restaurant was, as usual, crowded; the long tables were packed with the same throng — Richard could have said, almost the same faces, for places have a way of lending expression to the countenances of those who frequent them. In the rows of well-dressed men there Richard recognized what he had come to know as the “Maxim face” — an expression jaded and jangled by the heat and the noise, excited by champagne, and greedy with sensual hunger. He pulled his hat down over his forehead, and made his way rapidly to a corner, where room was made for him between two ladies who were without partners, and who with one comprehending look appraised him as a person who was not for the moment a buyer. The instinct of the *demi-mondaine* in such matters is seldom at fault, nor is her recognition of friendly generosity. One of them, a tired-looking English girl with beautiful eyes, put her hand on Richard’s arm.

“Order me some champagne, will you, dear?” she said. “I’ve got no money, and if I don’t order something they won’t let me stop.”

Richard was already experienced enough to recognize, in the rather shabby forty-guinea lace

frock, the beautiful hat no longer fresh, the well-designed imitation jewels, and the cleaned white kid gloves, signs of a struggle, a gamble with heavy stakes. He had learned also that directness and definiteness of intention are never in that world regarded as an insult.

"All right," he said, "with pleasure; only I'm not here for amusement. I've come to look for somebody."

"You're a kind boy," she said. "Now I'm going to sit at another table. Good night, and thank you." And, when he had given the order for her, she went off, with a sympathetic tact which is one of the many virtues of her world. Richard ordered the inevitable champagne for himself and a box of cigarettes, which he began feverishly to smoke as from his corner he carefully scrutinized the sea of faces at the tables beyond.

But before his anxious gaze had travelled very far he was thrilled by the sound of a well-known voice, rising clear above all the hubbub and babel.

"O my Gott, I never laugh so much in *all* my life! I give you my vord—" and a ripple of laughter, as musical as a child's, flowed out across the room.

For a moment the scene went dark before Richard's eyes; it was only for a moment, and immediately it was there before him again, with its glowing lights, white tables, flowers, gay dresses,

jewels, faces; but in that moment of eclipse it had changed. It was no longer a miscellaneous collection of strangers; it had become transformed into a setting for one face, one voice, one figure. She was sitting quite near him, but half-turned away from him, and obviously she had not seen him. She was looking more radiant than ever; that auriferous quality in her hair and eyes and skin that had always dazzled and delighted him shone all about her, and made of her a sun among the stars and constellations around her. His eyes were held to her helplessly for a moment, and he felt his soul flowing out of them to her; and it was with a great physical effort that he turned away from her and looked at her partner.

They were seated alone at a table bearing the remains of a luxurious and extravagant dinner. The table was covered with rare orchids; one or two boxes of impossible fruit — impossibly out of season — were lying about; a glittering edifice of ice was melting away in the heat on an adjoining table; and unfinished bottles of champagne, a decanter of port, a flask of liqueur, and half a dozen boxes of different kinds of cigarettes completed the luxurious furniture of the meal, which had evidently protracted itself throughout the whole of the evening. The centre of the table was occupied by a dwarf cherry-tree in a pot, on whose unnatural little branches the full-sized crimson fruit was growing. While Richard was still look-

ing at her, Toni pulled off a cherry, put the end of the stalk between her teeth, and leaned over until her lips almost touched those of the man opposite to her.

It was then that Richard forced his eyes away from her to the man; and as he looked a wave of bitter sickness and nausea flowed over him. Sitting at the table with Toni, and visibly gloating over her, sat a big man with a hard, coarse, brutal face. His beady eyes shone with lust and desire; his leathery skin hung in puffs and pouches about his broad face; and his gross mouth trembled and twitched as he leaned forward and closed his lips over Toni's cherry. She dropped her eyelids in an affectation of languorous rapture that set the creature opposite to her agog with excited amusement. He gurgled and shook with laughter; then suddenly he stopped; a hard, almost painful look of seriousness and greed came into his eyes, and he leaned over and whispered in Toni's ear.

The petulant pucker that Richard knew so well came into her forehead.

"Oh, no, my dear, I am so tired. I *never* was so tired in all my life. True — really;" and she nodded her head briskly till the flowers in her hat shook, and her gaze wandered abstractedly around the room. The man shrugged his shoulders and sat back, lighting another cigarette, and eying her through the smoke.

After his first qualm of sickness and horror,

Richard steeled himself to look and listen, although his limbs trembled and his brown face was mottled and ashy with the agony he was suffering. Although he sat immovable in a kind of trance, he was vividly conscious of the scene before him; and he noticed again that strange clarity of sound in this heated room, so that one seemed to hear quite clearly fifty conversations going on at once. Their aggregate noise never seemed to obscure or obliterate the individual voices. He had heard quite clearly every word spoken by Toni and the man; and he knew that while he sat there he must still listen, and drink to the dregs the bitter cup that he had brewed for himself.

And as he thus sat in the gay market of passion and beauty, amid the clamor of laughter and talk, the clink of dishes and glasses, and the passionate melodies of the orchestra, he knew that he loved her with all his heart and soul — with everything but his judgment. He bravely faced the facts; he wondered, indeed, if the love in which judgment can share could be love at all, and whether the very essence of love did not consist in abandonment to forces to which the mind is an eternal subordinate; but as he looked at her he remembered, and knew that there was nothing base or shameful in his love. Toni was looking around the room, as though searching for some one; and one of her rare moments of repose had

fallen on her. How lovely her fair, small face was now, with its smouldering golden eyes under the tawny hair. God! how grave and beautiful, with the gravity and beauty of a wondering child! Yet in the eyes there hovered an ageless, inscrutable mystery; they seemed again to Richard to draw him down into their depths, as into bottomless wells of time. Suddenly he realized quite clearly that she was a thousand years, a thousand miles, away from him; that a barrier as impassable as that of death had arisen between them; that he was now looking at a heavenly picture, an effigy, of some one who was lost to him.

From a corner table, where a distinguished-looking man and an exceedingly refined and beautiful woman had been sitting quietly, with a rapt and happy expression on their faces, a *maitre d'hôtel* brought a note to the leader of the orchestra. He bowed and smiled, spoke to his instrumentalists, brought his fiddle over to the corner table, and, fixing his eyes on the woman there, began the first solemn, sonorous notes of Wolfram's song in "Tannhäuser." The trembling string almost articulated the sombre words, —

"Wie Todesahnung, Damm'rung deckt die Lande," —

and as the gloomy phrase, in such sharp contrast to the waltzes and riotous rhythms that had preceded it, fell upon the conversational

clamor, there was a sudden hush, and then a murmur of impatient disapproval. A woman sitting near the band shouted: "Oh, là, là! Dis-donc, c'est pas un enterrement?" but a dozen voices said "Sh-sh!" and the incident was over. Wagner is generally triumphant in proportion to the humanity of his audience; and in this very human crowd the exotic sentimentality of *O du mein holder Abendstern*, innocently sung by the respectable Wolfram, but really a strain from the Venusberg if ever music was, had its due and impressive effect.

But with its very first notes came to Richard an almost intolerable stab of pain and association. It took him back to that long day of happiness that had ended with "Tannhäuser" at the Opera, when Toni's delight in it, and his own delight in her sensitive and changing impressions, had made it a new thing for him. He remembered how, in the dark hours of the night, he had whispered to her: "*die näch't'ge Dämm'ung theilt dein lieber Strahl!*" and the little tremor of understanding with which she had responded. Now, as this echo of that evening sounded across the crowded Bacchanalian scene, he dared not look at Toni; the music brought back with far too acute and aching a reality the creature that he and the unwonted surroundings had made of her in those happy days. He listened to every note of the melodious recitative that floated about as though

on a shimmer of clouds and starlight, and afterward to the voluptuous song; and then he heard an exclamation from her, and looked up.

She was staring into her partner's face, her eyes glittering with tears which she kept brushing away, and which reappeared as fast as she dried them. The man was questioning her, evidently puzzled and put out; and then suddenly she lost all control of herself, and, burying her face in her hands, burst into sobs.

"What's the matter, my dear? Tell me what's the matter," reiterated the man, somewhat embarrassed by an occurrence that in any other place would have made them both ridiculous. Here where intoxication and revelry, tears and laughter, fury and amiability, all bubbled together in the cauldron of pleasure, no one took any notice except the people at the adjoining tables; and even they were merely politely interested, with the interest of people who have themselves understood and suffered much, and who know life too well to be capable of astonishment. And so far was Toni from misunderstanding or resenting their interest that she took them into her audience, and included them in her explanation.

"O my Gott, what a fool — a *fool* I am! I never was such a fool in my life. But I tell you, that music, it reminds me — you see? — of some von — a man I love once — O my Gott, how I love that man! We were so happy together — I never

was so happy in all my life; he was such a smart man — really, I tell you, a smart man, and he was mad — oh, *madly* — in love with me. But he got no money, my dear; he was no use — no money; I tell you, I was a damn fool to fall in love with him. And yet — but we quarrel; once we quarrel, and then twice — no good! And this music you see — ‘Tannhäuser’ — we hear it together once; and it remind me of him. O my Gott!” And her tears flowed afresh.

Richard heard it all with a strange mixture of emotion. Her tears — he had never seen her eyes shining with tears before — scalded his heart, as her momentary unhappiness, which he was powerless to assuage, harrowed his whole being; yet he was not unconscious of the element of comedy in the whole thing; indeed, he was perfectly conscious of it, and he was not sure that it did not add a further element of misery to the situation. But she cared for him; she remembered that she had been happy with him! Out of the tumbling ruin that surrounded him he caught at that, and held to it. It seemed to redeem so much, and somehow to make the inevitable end less bitter. That she should place it all as an incident in the remote past was the instinct of her class for watertight compartments, for separating the different and necessarily hostile elements of life from disastrous collision; that she should cry it aloud to the surrounding world was characteristic of her

primitive elemental outlook on life — an outlook which did not include shame of what one does or suffers.

Yet Richard felt that the situation was becoming unbearable. He had come to this place for the express purpose of suffering and seeing things clearly; he had undergone, was acutely undergoing, the suffering; and he was wise enough to desire also to accomplish the real end for which he had deliberately exposed himself to these tortures. If Toni should by any chance discover him here the consequences might be disastrous; he was longing now to go away and escape from the intolerable strain; yet this tearful episode had disturbed him, and interrupted the process of mortification that had been going on in his heart. He must drink the cup to its dregs.

A little space had been cleared at the end of the room, and half a dozen couples were dancing to the gay strains that had succeeded the violin solo. Suddenly the tune of *La Mascisce* was struck up; and to its first notes Toni dried her eyes, broke into smiles again (much to the satisfaction of her host), and clapped her hands with delight.

"Yes, my dear," she reassured him, "I'm all right — *quite* right now. I was a fool, my dear, a fool. Oh, there's Germaine, I *must* go and dance with her." And without a word she ran off, joined the dancers, and in a moment was perfectly happily engaged in the performance of

the somewhat ugly and indecent dance of the moment. Her lightning changes bewildered Richard, yet they helped him to realize the shifting nature of the emotional sands on which he had tried to build his happiness. The building was there, but the foundations would not hold it up; it was destined to fall; and as, well screened behind other spectators, he watched Toni floating happily around the dancing-place, he unconsciously took his farewell of her beauty, drinking it in for the last time. The pain that he suffered was less the pain of a wound than that of a death; something he felt was dying within him, and it was a cold, long-drawn, and terrifying experience.

Something now occurred, however, that helped to bring his self-inflicted torture to an end. Toni suddenly caught sight of a good-looking youth whom she knew, ran over to him, and led him out to dance with her. It was, of course, against all the etiquette of her profession, while she was the guest of some one else; but it was thoroughly characteristic of her waywardness and perversity and impatience of restraint; it was a habit from which he himself had suffered, and it explained probably why she was there at all, and not the permanent mistress of some brilliant hôtel in the Champs Elysées. Richard instinctively turned to look at the hard man who was still sitting alone at the table; and he saw his coarse face turn sour

and scowling. Jealousy is always an ugly passion; but the kind of jealousy felt by this poor creature, who was so repulsive that he could only at the best look for pleasures bought, and bought at a high price, shone upon his face and transfigured it in a perfect ecstasy of ugliness. The exaggerated and shameless intimacy of the dance added to his tortures; and for a moment Richard had an unreasonable pang of hope that he would be so disgusted with Toni as to leave the place.

But her acute instinct taught her just how far she could go; and it was not unlikely that the whole thing had been deliberately done to add the final whet of jealousy to the man's desire. She only danced a few turns with her friend, said good night to him, and returned, radiant and sparkling, to the table. Richard with a shudder saw her stoop down and give the hard man a kiss. Then she sat down opposite to him, while he leaned forward and began to speak earnestly in a low voice.

What he said Richard could not hear, although he knew only too well. Toni's replies he heard quite distinctly.

"No, my dear; I don't do that sort of thing. It's not good enough. I'm not that sort of person."

The man spoke again.

"Ah, that's another thing. Where you say? Ritz's? You want me to come and stay at Ritz's

with you for a fortnight? I don't think I want to. I'm *very* tired, and I want to go to Vienna. No, my dear, another time I stay with you."

Again the man spoke, this time with a shocking and repulsive intensity.

"How much?" The clear young voice put the question with just a tremor of well-disguised anxiety. The world has admiration for stock-brokers who have a cool head and a sure touch in the financial dealings by which they live; it has none for a girl of three and twenty who, against society, with no protection of law or social machinery, has also to transact all alone the difficult and delicate negotiations by means of which the rent of her flat and the price of her motor-car are paid.

Richard heard her, saw her; he heard the price, saw the whole hideous bargain struck; knew that the unlovely creature opposite had a lease of the youth and fairness, the heavenly summer beauty that for him had been a passport to paradise. . . . He could bear no more. The scene swam before him while he called the *maitre d'hôtel* and paid his bill. He stumbled out to the doorway, and the great swinging panels revolved behind him. Of a sudden the music faded from his ears, the lights and flowers from his sight; and with them, in one awful wrench, were torn from his heart, broken and bleeding, the nerves and roots of his love. For the moment the world

was blotted out in loathing and horror of himself and of her. . . .

And yet — if we could but understand, if we could climb to those heights where there is no forgiveness because there is no need for it! Moments of storm may tempt us to injustice, but beyond storms there is a serene region of the mind to which in happier moments we may attain, where we may learn that the wise and prudent have no monopoly of eternal pity and love.

V

In Salutem Omnium

IT was nearly thirty-six hours later when Richard sank back with a sigh of relief on the cushions of his seat in the Cornish express and watched the riverside towns sliding past the window. The interval since that moment when the door of Maxim's had closed behind him seemed filled with a life of nightmare. He had walked and walked, not knowing or caring whither, through the empty streets of Paris, until the broadening sunshine had put his evening dress to shame and sent him back to his hotel. There, when he had bathed and changed, he found a telegram summoning him to a meeting of the Trinity Board the same afternoon, which he could just attend by catching the early express to London. But during his tormented walk in the small hours, a desire had gradually taken shape in his mind — had, indeed, come to the rescue of his tortured endurance — the desire to be present at the Snail when the lighthouse was first lighted. That was to be on Friday at sunset; and the telegram,

which suggested the possibility of some interference with this plan, only strengthened his desire. In a kind of numb dream he had hurried to London, where he arrived on the Thursday afternoon. An early autumn gale was brewing in the Channel, and during the rough passage he had taken a delight in remaining on deck when every one else sought shelter, and getting drenched with the spray that continually broke over the ship's side. He had just had time to change, and to attend the meeting of the Board, at which his final accounts were passed and he received the congratulations of the Brethren.

“But all work and no play, you know, Mr. Grey” — one kindly old gentleman had said — “it won't do. You've been working too hard, and you're looking quite knocked up. You must take a holiday. We can't afford to have you laid up.” And he had patted him kindly on the back, and been a little hurt when Richard moved abruptly away; for his nerves were in such a state that a friendly human voice and touch brought him to the verge of breakdown. Moreover, the Board had asked for some detailed plans to be prepared at once; and this had upset him, for it meant that he could not catch the night train, and would probably miss the first lighting of the tower, on which he found his mind had been set. But at any rate it occupied him, and kept up the rush that had lasted ever since the early morning; and

he worked far into the night and had only finished at two o'clock, when he threw himself exhausted upon his bed and slept dreamlessly until nine. He had been awakened by squalls of rain that, even in the sheltered London street, rattled and streamed against his window; and he had been obliged to hurry through official occupations without a moment to think of his own affairs, until he had just caught the 10.50 express at Paddington without a minute to spare.

And even now, as he felt the train gathering speed for its long journey to the west, he had scarcely time to think of what hovered like a shadow in the back of his mind. He had come to desire passionately to sit in the lighthouse on that night of its first illumination. He had reconciled himself to being late, as he could not reach Helston until after seven, and it was nearly two hours' drive to Poltesco Head; and his only pre-occupation was whether he could reach the lighthouse at all. The wind, which was from the southeast, had every appearance of rising to a gale, and would in any case mean a heavy sea on the Snail, and it would probably be out of the question to attempt it in a boat. His only chance was if he could reach the rock at low water, and make use of the sling and cradle that bridged the channel between the mainland and the rocks. He had no almanac with him, and he spent half an hour in calculations on a piece of paper as to the

time of low water. The result showed dead low water at half-past eight, which suited so nearly with his needs that he doubted the accuracy of his calculations, or of his memory of the tides, and went all over them again. At last he realized that he must trust to luck, and that all his figuring would not alter the tides by an inch. He threw the paper away, and leaned back against the cushions.

The train roared through Chippenham, and sped out again into the stormy country, where the trees were tossing in the wind and shedding their leaves fast before it. A squall of rain struck against the windows, and drowned the landscape in streaming tears. Richard's thoughts, that had been clinging desperately to whatever eyes could see, now turned inwards, to feed upon themselves. Gingerly, like one who treads unwillingly a path that he knows leads to horror, he retraced the events of the past thirty-six hours. His hurry to catch the train, his awakening in the London bedroom, his night of hard work, the meeting of the Board, the stormy journey from France, the telegram at his hotel in Paris, his early morning wandering in the streets; his thoughts stopped there, like a shying horse that refuses to cross a dark bridge. Twice he went back, and led himself up to that moment, and twice shirked it, fled from it. In a sort of panic he opened his suit-case to find a book; as

he did so he displaced a hair-brush — a soft one which he was not in the habit of using. He was putting it into its place when he caught a waft of perfume; he took out the brush again and smelled it.

Instantly, without effort or terror, his thoughts turned like a flight of birds back to the summer of his happiness. He was with Toni again; this was the brush that she had used on that laughing morning at Barbizon, — oh, so many years ago! — and still held a faint memory of the perfume she used. He saw her, not as on that last terrible night, but as she had been when awakened to him and to the flash of pagan life which they had enjoyed together. He closed his eyes, and the roar of the train and the swish of the wind sank into quietness. It was dark, a summer-scented darkness and silence, out of which thrilled the two voices of the nightingales. Their song bubbled and swelled, thrilled, chuckled, languished, silver threads against the black velvet of night. A soft, tender figure wrapped in his coat snuggled close beside him; a quiet voice, awed, ravished by the music, whispered, "They call one to another!" . . . That seemed the real Toni, although she seemed dead to him now, and far away; the other, upon whom his thoughts now dwelt without dismay, seemed unreal and shadowy. The night in Maxim's was like a bad dream; it was not true. He was thinking of it quite clearly, when suddenly

he thought, "What is she doing at this moment?" and with a wave of sickening weakness he realized that she was not dead, but living. This thought also he faced, but was surprised to find how unreal it was to him. An old saying of Sir Thomas Browne's came into his head — "Afflictions induce callosities." The flying wheels of the train took up the word: callosities, callosities, callosities, until he lost the sense of it, and the whole sentence sounded like gibberish.

A glimpse of white and angry sea brought him back to himself and his destination. The gale was increasing, and he often heard it above the roaring of the train, like the soft brushing of wings against the roof of the carriage. The sun, travelling westward with them, now shone brightly from a sky almost empty of clouds, and Richard began to find an exhilarating correspondence between its anger and his own stormy thoughts, in the centre of which, as in a calm, he seemed to live in a dream. He went into the luncheon-car and ate mechanically, watching the dull, stolid people hungrily following the waiters about with their eyes, and bolting with ill-concealed greed their portions of the badly cooked food. At other times it would have amused him; now he saw them merely as grotesque and shadowy actors in the drama of life which, in spite of his disinclination for it, persisted before his eyes.

When he returned to his carriage he found that

some one had left a West of England newspaper; and there on the front page his eye caught an advertisement, to the appearing of which he had often looked forward:

“NOTICE TO MARINERS. — The Elder Brethren of the Trinity hereby give notice that a Lighthouse has been erected on the Outer Snail Rock, Poltesco Head, Cornwall, and that a Light will be exhibited there on the night of October 1 next, and every night thereafter from Sunset to Sunrise until further notice. The light will be visible from E. by N. $\frac{3}{4}$ N. to SW. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. Southerly, and will be known to Mariners as a Revolving Light, appearing as a Bright Flash, every 10 seconds, the duration of the Flash being 1 second, and of Eclipse 9 seconds. To a near observer in favorable circumstances the Light will not wholly disappear between the Flashes. The Light is situated 120 feet above H. W. spring tides, and is visible in clear weather at a distance of seventeen Nautic miles. It is situated in Lat. $50^{\circ} 0' 15''$, and Long. $5^{\circ} 6' 10''$, and bears from the Eddy-stone Rock W. $\frac{1}{8}$ S. $34\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and from Ushant N. by E. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. $92\frac{1}{2}$ miles. It is High Water at the Outer Snail Rock at Full and Change of the Moon, 5 hrs. 11 m.”

And every night thereafter! That was a bold statement, but there was something grand in its

calm confidence. He read the notice with a curious feeling of detachment, almost as a stranger might read it, and the nautical details, so utterly without interest to the landsman, presented it to him from a new aspect. He had always thought of the tower from his own point of view, and had always seen it from the rocks or from the coast: now he saw it as the mariner saw it, a low bright star far away on a horizon of tumbling sea, beckoning toward home and safety. But his thoughts came back to the words "and every night thereafter, from Sunset to Sunrise." Had he really had a hand in a work so permanent? Had he really lighted a star whose shining and eclipsing was determined by things so everlasting and punctual as sunset and sunrise? To be thus involved with the rising and the setting of the sun, to have geared up to that great machinery a thing which, however unconsciously, it would be compelled to work, pleased his fancy for a moment and gave him a sense of partnership in eternal concerns. . . . And then his thoughts swung around again to Toni, and clung to her; it was heavenly rest to forget everything, to make no struggle, but to shut his eyes and believe that she was close to him. Without her he felt that nothing else was of interest or mattered to him at all. He thought with bitterness that it was only necessary for the lighthouse to be thrown down by the gale for the whole of his life to crumble

away in failure; yet his sense of the additional disaster that the ruin of the lighthouse would be did not help him to see how much really remained in his life. And as the train hurried and swung along he was thus being preyed upon by his mind and his heart, his mind telling him practical and unlovely truths, his heart yearning for her whom he had lost. The very sight of the trees tossing in the wind, and every suggestion of natural beauty in the passing landscape, filled him with that nostalgia of joy which is one of the death-struggles of youth, and marks the passage of our life into a grayer region. Yet all he felt, he felt as one in a fever, in a dream. He was conscious only of an intense desire to press forward, to do the next thing; he felt as though he were waiting for some striking and significant event.

As the afternoon wore on, the wind continued to rise. At Saltash only had it seemed calm; over those deep-sheltered arms of the sea, where the old warships lie dreaming at their landlocked moorings, no wind seems ever to blow, and the deep green water was scarcely ruffled. But out at Dawlish the sea was white with foam, and was breaking angrily over the warm red Devon earth, bursting on the sea-wall and showering spray over the windows and roofs of the carriages as they tore past. The rain had ceased, and as they wound through Cornwall it had hardened into a strong, dry gale from the southeast. Whenever

the train stopped at some wayside station on that wild line, it was shaken and buffeted by the gusts. At Lostwithiel a tree had been blown down outside the station; at Truro the train was half an hour late, and an extra engine had to be put on. When at last Richard changed at Gwinear Road, the sun was setting amid a wrack of flying clouds that promised more rather than less wind. The gale howled around the desolate little station where he had to wait, while apparently endless shunting evolutions were performed by the Helston train; but at last they were off, and running through the more sheltered valleys that traverse the neck of the great promontory.

At Helston a carriage with two good horses was waiting for him, and he set off, well wrapped up, in the gathering dusk along the bleak road toward the Lizard. The leaves, many-colored still in the fading light, were scattering before the wind. The storm meant havoc in gardens, and an end of summer; when it passed it would leave autumn where summer had been. The likeness to his own life was too obvious to be missed by Richard, who felt storm and autumn together in his heart, but did not at the moment realize that great winds may sweep away more than dying flowers and leaves, and that autumn is the foundation of spring as well as the ruins of summer. Darkness fell before they had half-covered the thirteen miles — a gross starless darkness, in which the

carriage lamps made moving fields of light where the shadows of trees and hedges tossed.

At last, across the wildest part of the downs, the ground began gradually to fall, and Richard began to watch. For some time he saw nothing; but at a turn of the road he suddenly caught a white glow in the sky. It disappeared instantly, and came again; and then, as the carriage turned into the road toward Poltesco Head, he had a full view of what he had come so far to see. From a distant point in the black night a white star shone out, wheeled in a forty-mile spoke across the sky, and disappeared. Some horses in a field began to whinny and stampede; and whenever the light flashed around again it showed a frightened crowd of cattle huddled together in a corner, lowing and blowing with wonder.

"The stock don't seem to like it much, sir," said the driver with an air of uttering the last word of wisdom, as he whipped up his own shying horses. "It don't belong to make so much blazin' over the land. But it do look pretty enough, sure, so long as it do no harm to the stock."

"Oh, drive on!" said Richard, who was far too excited to notice what the man said. "Hurry up, or I won't be in time." And the two specks of light from the lamps went on through the wild night, under the great wheeling rays in the sky. As the carriage passed a dip in the downs Richard caught a glimpse of lights twinkling in the Her-

mitage. The sight of them gave him a momentary sense of pleasure and warmth at the heart. They represented, he felt sure, a friendship the thought of which was curiously grateful to him.

Under the lee of the storehouse on Poltesco Head a little group of men, including several members of the life-boat crew, was sheltering, occasionally darting out into the wind to take another look at the light, which looked from this near point like a great revolving chrysalis of glass and silver, and hurrying back with an impression or an opinion. Only old Treleath, his back bent to the gale, remained exposed, his eyes fixed on the ghostly tower with its capital of light that shone across the yeasty foam. As one employed on the works his utterances were received with more than usual respect.

"Well, souls," he shouted, slowly, "there he be, established for good an' all, thanks to we. Once every ten seconds, till kingdom do come, Amen."

"Ay, so et be, so et be," said Johns the Postmaster, feeling that some comment was required of an educated man.

"I call to mind," continued Treleath, "the last measure of mortar I mixed for en. I run short of Pozzylanny,¹ and I sez to myself, 'Shall I fill en up with lime? 'Twould be a great saving o' labor.' But I sez, 'No,' sez I, 'Mr. Macneil, he

¹ (*Sic*) Pozzolano earth.

sez, "One measure of lime, one o' sand, and one o' Pozzylanny, Treleath, or you'll bring the tower down." So up I goes and fetches the Pozzylanny, and mixes all true and just, 'or,' sez I, 'I could never sleep in my bed o' windy nights.' So true and just I mixed en, and there 'e do stand, to be sure," pointing to the result of his integrity.

"Ay, to be sure 'e do," said an acquiescent voice, "fair and square, to be sure."

Joseph Gilbert, the coxswain of the life-boat, now spoke, knocking the ashes from his pipe and watching the sparks streaming away on the wind.

"Well, boys," he said, "what about we? There won't be so many jobs for we, I reckon."

"No, nor so many pickin's in the cove," said an old man. "Time was when every gale brought ets wreck; but what with they life-boats, and lighthouses, and Macaroni poles, we don't seem to make use of nothen now. 'Tis changed times to Poltesco for we ancient ones."

"Ay, but gov'nment must have ets turn, Willum," said another, evidently regarding the lighthouse as a kind of rival wrecking organization. "Let all have a turn."

"That's but just and fair, friends," assented Johns, who having drawn government money for twelve years felt he was called upon to acknowledge this tribute. "But 'tis strange that Mr. Grey bean't down to Poltesco to see the light lit."

"Mr. Grey's a-comen all right," said Treleath.

"Harry have taken the carriage to Helston for en. They belong to be here soon now."

There was silence for awhile except for the howling of the wind and the roar of the surf. The men all huddled under the wall with the exception of Treleath, who stayed out where he could see the lighthouse. The bright revolving rays, striking on him every ten seconds, lit up his pale face and blue watery eyes directed toward the tower, which he gazed at in ecstasy, heedless of the spray that tingled in his face. He was murmuring to himself over and over again in a kind of chant, "I made he to be so stout as he be! I made he to be so stout as he be!"

Presently the sound of wheels was heard grating over the rough road, and lamps shone in the darkness. The carriage drew up, and discharged, first, a large bundle swathed in shawls, the partial unwinding of which disclosed Mrs. Treleath. She immediately rushed toward the bent old man, her high voice mingling with the wind.

"There he be, that tender dear, all in the storm and wetness, and his supper set for him at home, and his warm bed a-waiten; and never should I have prevailed with the wind but for Mr. Grey a-taking mercy on me, and me riden in the carriage with he, for all the world to see! Come out of the light, my lovey, and don't get struck by the fluid." She drew him tenderly aside toward the shelter, humoring his reluctance. "Ay, beautiful

it do look, to be sure, tender dear, and a lovely ornament to the coast it do make. To think that such should be!"

Richard had meanwhile got out his portmanteau, and had gone over to the lightkeepers' houses. He stood for a moment in the flood of light from the open door, talking to the men. A glance had shown him that the tide had only just turned, and that the outer rocks were bare but for a fleece of foam that swept over them, while over the angry chasm of deep water that separated the nearest rock from the cliff the wire rope of the travelling cradle stretched out into the darkness.

"Come along, boys, and sling me out," he shouted. "I must go out to the light. Treleath, you be off home to bed. The carriage will take you and your wife home. There's nothing more to see."

The men, timid on his account, remonstrated, but he brushed aside their fears, and was soon suspended in the cradle, sliding down toward the bare black rocks and the swirling foam beyond. Safely landed, he shouted back to the cliff reassuringly, and began the really difficult part of his task. The rocks were never uncovered for more than a moment, as the breakers that were split up and divided by the outer reef met again in foam over them; but he knew every foothold, though he was often up to his knees in water. He

was partly sheltered from the full force of the wind, which was in any case moderating, although sometimes it caught him in sudden claps that threatened to knock him down. The real danger, as he clambered farther and farther out, lay in the waves, which now and then broke solid on the rocks, and swept green water right over them. The iron hand-rail that guarded the causeway was in this case his only hope, and it, little as it opposed the weight of the waves, vibrated with every breaking of a billow. If he had not known exactly the nature of every level and shelf of rock on which he was walking, his situation would have been terrifying, for though the rocks were nominally bare at low water, the high wind and heavy sea covered them now with three feet of tortured and frothing spume. As it was, it was daunting enough to be thus walking apparently on a stormy sea; and the heaving rollers, as they came up towering and glimmering out of the black night, and thundering into spray, seemed every time as though they would overwhelm him. The rays from the tower were too high above his head to illuminate his path, and he walked in a gross darkness that was only relieved by the ghostly glimmer of the foam. Twice he was drenched in green water from head to foot, and had to cling for his life to the hand-rail; but when he at last got on to the Outer Snail, the higher level of the rock, and the shelter it afforded, made his path

easier, so that he arrived safely, although drenched, and a little bruised and exhausted, under the lee of the tower. He climbed the iron ladder, opened the heavy oak door, and thankfully shook himself free from some of the salt water.

He climbed through the tank-room and store-room, and opened the kitchen door. A flood of light and warmth greeted him. Outside the gale was howling, and the seas bursting on the seaward side of the tower; but here all was warmth and peace, a bright fire glowing, a kettle singing on the range, pots and pans shining on the dresser, and an open book under the lamp on the table, where some one had evidently been reading. How peaceful and sheltered it was! A lump rose in Richard's throat, and his eyes became misty as this sudden lamp-lit picture of simple, innocent life succeeded the anger and commotion of the stormy night outside. It was like a modulation in music, as when a quiet, tender melody emerges from the sudden hush that follows a tempest of the orchestra. And it was he who had raised that home in the air amid the spray and the breaking waves!

Reluctantly he left the kitchen, and climbed another story into the keepers' bedrooms, where he nearly frightened the assistant keeper—off duty and arranging his wardrobe in the cupboards—out of his wits. Here he had a rub down, changed, and, clad in the assistant keeper's best

uniform, climbed up again through the second sleeping berth and the oil store into the light-room. He paused for a moment at the top of the ladder, with his head just above the floor, and stood looking up into the room.

On its metal stage in the middle of the room, floating in a bath of mercury, the great glittering lens revolved noiselessly about the lamp. The toothed brass wheels of the clock that moved it turned, regularly, slowly, noiselessly also; there was no sound but the humming of the wind around the glass lantern, the roar of the hot air from the lamp, and the occasional dull boom of a breaking wave beneath. Around and around, like a great jewel, went the fairy structure of crystal bars and segments and lenses, collecting every ray of light, and shooting them out in long parallel beams into the night. And within the magic cage, reverberating with the very essence of life, holy and inviolable, hovered the soul of the lighthouse in its sheet of pure white flame. In every surface of the circling mirrors it took its centre, like the point of fire that lurks behind every facet of a diamond: a thousand fires within one fire; a thousand lights, and yet but one light. A fountain of flame welled from the invisible centre, overflowing and dripping with light; yet every drop of it, every straying sliver of liquid fire, was caught up and saved by the carefully angled mirrors, and poured forth in long raying beams to

the far-away horizon, where the ships were driving and plunging through the storm. Beside it sat the slave of the lamp, its minister and guardian; now pumping from the immense oil reservoirs below fresh streams of vitality to its passionate heart, now winding up with a winch the mysterious creature of cog-wheels and springs that kept it in circling motion and timed the flashes of its unsleeping eye; now sitting quietly beside it, observant of its wheeling rays against the darkness.

A sense of solemnity, sudden and profound, held Richard's feet upon the threshold, as before the steps of a shrine. He seemed to be in the presence of a spirit, silent and all-seeing. What had he done? What creature had he called into being, that thus seemed to search into his soul, and solemnly to interrogate him with a gaze that included the whole visible heaven and earth? For a few minutes he stood there spellbound, hypnotized as it were by the spirit of his work. Then he reminded himself of how many lighthouses he had been in, and shaking himself free of his preoccupation, came up and greeted the lightkeeper.

"Good evening, Mr. Evans; well, how's she doing?"

"God's sake, Mr. Grey, I thought you were a ghost!" quavered the man, on whose nerves many years' service on rock lights had had their effect. "How in the world did you come off, sir?"

Richard described his journey, and then repeated his question about the light.

"Everything's very good indeed, sir, couldn't be better. The timing's a little irregular now and then, — once in half an hour, perhaps, she drops a second, — but that's only the governor; we'll put that right in the morning."

"Do you notice any shaking?"

"Oh, nothing, sir. This afternoon, at high water, there was a little vibration when a heavy sea struck her, and we may feel it again toward morning when the wind falls and the swell gets up; but it's nothing to the Smalls or the Bishop, sir!"

"Well, you'll have a chance of finding that out in winter. There's no weight in this gale. I'm going out on the balcony."

The heavy gun-metal door on the shoreward side of the lantern was opened, and Richard stepped out once more into the shouting night. With difficulty he made his way around to the seaward side of the balcony, and stood full in the gale. Even above the roaring it made in his ears he could hear it howling and humming against the metal ventilator and crying, with wild, lost cries, around the flagstaff and the slatting cords. Behind him, his mysterious creature circled and shone like a sun; before him lay the storm and the night, with the long pencils of light pointing and wheeling across it. At his feet the glimmer

of the foam showed up the angry sea, forever advancing its great dark waves up to the rock, crashing and thundering upon it, and licking hungrily up the white shapely side of the tower. Steadily and powerfully as they marched in, a new one rising where another fell; eternal and infinite as was the force that led their endless ranks to the assault, though they struck, embraced, hurled themselves in solid ranks, shot hissing tongues to destroy, bellowed and foamed in their grand and melancholy rage, yet they crumbled harmlessly against the tower's smooth sides, and sank back exhausted before its serene immobility. As Richard leaned against the balcony-rail looking upon this grand and dark scene, a sense of healing and peace began to inhabit his soul. He stood motionless, entranced, not counting time, unconscious almost of space, alone in the dark firmament with the splendid sun of his kindling.

The wind, now beginning sensibly to diminish in force, poured over him a stream of freshness, soft and mellow for all its weight, and without sting or bitterness. And as it blew, it seemed to blow through and through him, in deep cleansing and renewing draughts. He bared himself to its influence, bared even his secret wound to it, and felt the passion and the poison passing from his heart. He thought deliberately of Toni, and, although he was so far away, in circumstances so

utterly different from hers, he felt nearer to her than he had ever felt before. He watched the ray-
ing beams of light as in their travel around the horizon they pointed toward France; and even across the wild chasm of night and miles that lay between them, he felt that they flung a bridge, impassable by mortal feet, over which his spirit and hers might pass, and meet in an understanding of truths beyond regret and beyond illusion. He thought now of her loss without bitterness, and saw how inevitable it had always been; yet he still thought of the finding of her, even for so short a time, as great gain. Some part of her, the best of her perhaps, he knew that he had made his own, still possessed, and held forever independently of any action of hers; he felt, too, that she had made something of him that was not there before, something new in him that was her own, and that he could not destroy or take away even if he would. Things that last! He realized how he had always, all through his life, had a passion for them; and he remembered how Margaret Lauder had accused him of caring most for things that "did not love him back again." Was it true? He hardly knew, and yet his work, the things he made with his brain, they did not love him in return; and this Toni of his imagination, she did not any longer love him in return, either; yet he possessed her more completely than when she had loved him. He felt that the sundering

of himself from her in the flesh, from the body that he had worshipped with his own, was but the shedding and stripping away of the beautiful leaves and petals, so that the seed, the imperishable heart, might find its place in the soil.

So also, as the dark hours passed, and the light continued to burn and shine like a sun in the stormy sky, he became conscious of an ever-growing kindness for it and for the tower, a feeling of strength rooted in the labor of his hands. Sometimes he went into the light-room and sat for awhile with the keeper, watching the regular working of the clockwork, timing the revolving flashes, rejoicing in the pure steady flame within the lens; and sometimes he would go down and stand at the open door, and watch the waves foaming and raging helplessly against the smooth walls of the tower. As the small hours passed away the storm sank and waned, moaning itself away in sobs as its passion exhausted itself. But with the falling of the wind the sea rose, and as the tide rose also about the tower, it was struck repeatedly by heavy seas with a noise like the explosion of artillery. A faint tremor passed through it at the heaviest of these assaults, but it was the tremor of elastic strength, that can bend a little to resist an attack. And whenever Richard looked seaward toward the murk and tumult and waste of desolate sea, he rejoiced in the strong clear beam sweeping over the waters.

Its regular passage soothed and heartened him infinitely. Once or twice he saw the lights of passing ships twinkling in the darkness, and once a glare, followed by a succession of fiery stars, — red, green, and white, — showed a steamer making her signal to Lloyd's. He knew what the lighthouse meant to them and to all who used that stormy highway, and he felt himself invested with something of the dignity of its simple usefulness.

Just before dawn he went out again to the balcony, and watched the gray daylight filter and spread through the darkness. As it increased, the rays from the light fell shorter and fainter, helpless to prevail, for all their power, against the light that was coming. Out of the gloom rose the coasts and the land, and with the falling of the wind and the absence of its salt odors, the smell from the earth came off, rich and fragrant in the morning air. The waves, unfretted by the wind, rolled in deep and heavy, at first a dull gray, and then, as the light increased, a furrowed sea of deepest indigo. The eastern horizon was banked with clouds, above which the reflection of the hidden fires of dawn began to wash the sky with opalescent tints, and to kindle a glow of saffron on the crests of the breaking waves. Suddenly behind him Richard heard a click; the glare ceased, and the roar of the ventilator died away.

“Sunrise, sir,” said the lightkeeper, with his watch in his hand; and together they looked eastward, where an edge of gold was eating into the banked clouds on the horizon. Overhead and behind them the sky was still dark and gloomy; but before them the eastern banks were breaking up and leaving the sky clear for the morning that welled, ever warmer and more golden, behind the torn veil of the storm.

RUAN MINOR, *October, 1905.*

THE END.

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